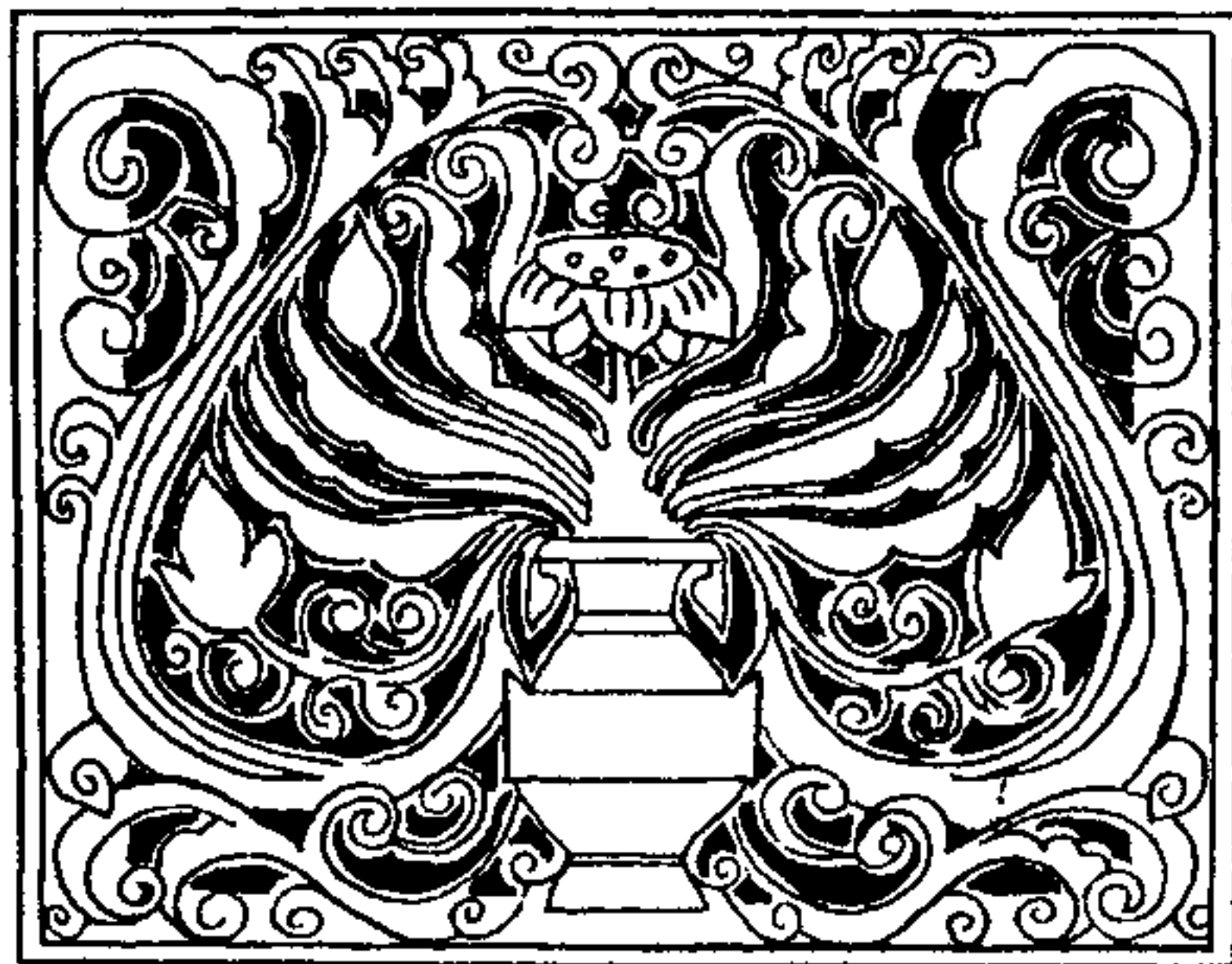




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उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Vol. 104

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No. 2

VEDIC PRAYERS

हयाम्यग्निं प्रथमं स्वस्तये
हयामि मित्रावरुणाविहावसे।
हयामि रात्रिं जगतो निवेशनीं
हयामि देवं सवितारमूतये॥

—Rg Veda, 1.35.1

I invoke Agni in the beginning for well-being. I call upon Mitra and Varuna for protection. I invoke the Goddess of Night, who brings rest to all living beings. I invoke Savita for protection.

ये ते पन्थाः सवितः पूर्या-
सोऽरेणवः सुकृता अन्तरिक्षे।
तेभिर्नो अद्य पथिभिः सुगेभी
रक्षा च नो अधि च ब्रूहि देव॥

—Rg Veda, 1.35.11

O Savita, your ancient paths are free from dust and are well-defined in the skies. Through such easy paths, come this day to protect us. And, O Lord, please guide us and teach us.

Knowing the Beginning

Of all the faculties of the human mind, the desire to know is of paramount importance. This is because, it is the yearning for knowledge and its subsequent consummation that make every endeavour fruitful. One can well imagine the situation had there not been the desire for knowledge: we would have been like trees or stones. Life is vibrant and pulsating, our minds are alive and healthy, our hearts are whole and noble—all owing to this great quality. This is because, a person of learning and an ignorant person are worlds apart. While the former has a sense of completeness, the latter is groping in darkness. The knowledge that has been acquired by human beings down the centuries is astounding indeed. This desire for knowing more and more is not gone; rather, it is increasing, and our knowledge is growing so rapidly day after day that it is becoming progressively difficult to keep track of all the developments in any one particular field, not to speak of the knowledge catalogue itself. Incidentally, the list of all the subjects that are current is long enough to fill a sizable book.

There is no end to knowing. The more we know, the greater will be the scope for knowing further, and therefore we shall invariably harbour a sense of inadequacy and become humble too, because we become keenly aware of how little our knowledge is.

Why should we know anything at all? Knowledge is power. It removes suffering. Knowledge is needed for development, expansion, right living, stability, and growth—both at the individual as well as the collective levels. Knowledge is needed for the mere joy of possessing it. In the final analysis, it must bring lasting happiness and fulfilment in life.

Why seeking knowledge alone, every other desire too targets that one coveted goal called perfection. A perfect man or woman does not need anything, does not aspire after anything, and is ever-contented. Out of contentment comes real happiness. It is the rest of us who are far away from the goal that need to know for our survival and progress.

Knowledge has several dimensions and branches of which to know about the world around and things associated with it, about our own body and mind, and about God and existence, are the generalizations. In the beginning, everything that was known through the five senses was termed as physics. And the knowledge which concerns things beyond was called metaphysics. It was Aristotle who distinguished between *physica* and *metaphysica*. The first one is the study of what we gain through the senses and the second is the study of what is beyond. It is this *physica* that has grown out into so many branches today. And *metaphysica* or metaphysics is philosophy. Epistemology is the science of knowledge.¹

The desire to know has a long history, if one may say so. Curiosity must have been born with the human race itself, though in the primitive stages knowing must have been confined to survival tactics. Slowly, however, more and more things came to notice, and the desire to know them also grew. Thus, the birth, growth, and decay of civilizations can

1. Dr. Radhakrishnan quotes Kautilya, the author of the compendium on Indian politics, *Arthaśāstra*: 'Philosophy is the lamp of all sciences.' cf. *Indian Philosophy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), Vol. 1, p. 23.

be attributed to knowledge alone. It is the aspiration for knowledge that has kept the human race alive for so long.

How do we know? Without going into epistemological details of the six ways of knowing according to Vedanta, we can state this much: Knowledge comes to us in two ways, either directly or indirectly. Indirect knowledge is chiefly acquired from scriptures or books, persons who know, and sometimes through even other living beings. Direct knowledge comes from personal experience. There is a higher concept of the method of knowing, and that is this: everything we receive from outside is only a suggestion to arouse the knowledge within.

The Beginnings

Twinkle, twinkle little star,
How I wonder what you are!

The same wonder that a kindergarten child expresses today at the sight of a star in the night sky was manifest in the ignorant and learned alike since time immemorial. It is the dark, black lid which covers us at night, with numerous tiny little lights, that we must thank for all the later discoveries and knowledge. If not fully, the sky is at least the major contributor to humanity's quest for knowledge. The sun, the night sky with countless stars, the moon, the wind, the sea, the lightning, the thunder, and then the earth itself — everything astonished the tiny creature called human being. This amazement has been the inspiration for all seeking and consequent knowledge that we have acquired. Amazingly enough, this awe at the forces of nature and the cosmos did not die down with the dawn of so-called modern civilization. From a simpleton to a genius, from an aborigine to the post-modern virtuoso academic — all have marvelled, and have been still marveling, at the things our eyes show us and the ears make us listen to. Only, very few persist in their desire to know about the marvels of nature.

One of the major questions that has puzzled humanity all through is this: Where did we, and all this, come from, and how? Is the world and all the stars and planets and sun and moon just there, or were they all created? If created, how and when? This desire to know about the origin of the universe gave rise to a wonderful science called cosmology. Cosmology is perhaps the oldest science, inferring from all that was mentioned above.

Cosmology precedes metaphysics. In fact, it precedes every other branch of learning; because, it is origin that leads to growth, decay, and death. It is educative and interesting to know how human beings have thought and conjectured about the beginnings of the universe. The consistent efforts of a galaxy of seekers is what has helped us know what we know about this subject now. The cosmologists of bygone ages were not as free as they are now. The resources, apparatus, help, co-operation, and public interest — everything was meagre in ancient times. Many of the observations of the seekers were looked at with scorn and disdain. When some of their pronouncements came in the way of the beliefs of people, the researchers were duly taken care of. One example of this 'taking care of' may be cited: the great Italian mathematician and philosopher, Giordano Bruno, was burned at the stake in AD1600 for his belief that space, suns and earths are infinite in number. Undaunted, however, by such brutalities, sincere seekers have been trying to know the truth of creation and cosmos in several ways and have been giving all possible explanations to assuage our curiosity. Since the '80s, with Stephen Hawking's contributions to cosmology, this study has gained further momentum.

Thus, from primitive theories to the big bang, we have an array of convictions about the origin of the universe. It is an awe-inspiring study to know them all. It is also possible to see how modern scientific approaches tally

with at least some of our ancient notions.

Why is it necessary to study cosmology? It is necessary to know this science because, we shall then have greater faith in God (as convictions of our limitations grow), we shall know what our position actually is, we shall understand what we are. Please read what Dr. Carl Sagan, the famous cosmologist wrote in his Introduction to Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*:

Except for children (who don't know enough not to ask important questions), few of us spend much time wondering why nature is the way it is; where the cosmos came from, or whether there are ultimate limits to what humans can know. ...Some are uncomfortable with issues like these, because they so vividly expose the limitations of human understanding. But much of philosophy and science has been driven by such inquiries. An increasing number of adults are willing to ask questions of this sort, and occasionally they get some astonishing answers.²

Maiden Response

It is not known exactly when human beings began their life on earth, and precisely when they began thinking about things higher than food and shelter. We have no available records of thoughts of peoples prior to the Vedic age.

Of the four Vedas³ (*R̥g*, *Yajus*, *Sāma*, and *Atharva*), the *R̥g Veda* is the oldest. The Hindu tradition holds that the *R̥g Veda* is over 15,000 years old. Like the other three Vedas, the *R̥g Veda* also has four divisions: the *mantra* por-

tion (also called *saṁhitā*) consisting mainly of petitions to gods and goddesses; the *brāhmaṇa* portion, consisting of instructions regarding various sacrifices; the *āranyaka* portion, popularly translated into English as 'forest treatises', which consist of specifications regarding sacrifices but have flashes of higher knowledge at places; and lastly, the Upaniṣadic portion which is called the 'knowledge portion' since the Upaniṣads are the guiding lights for humanity to know the supreme Truth.

The mantra portion of the *R̥g Veda* contains 10 circles (maṇḍalas) (or 'collections' according to Max Muller) in which there are 1017 hymns (*sūktas*) in all. It is from these circles that we get the first-ever glimpse of our ancestors' ideas about the beginning of the universe. We must note one thing: Vedic mantras are not mere poetry.

Dirghatamā is perhaps the first sage (*ṛṣi*) of the Vedas to inquire into the origin of the universe and give a mystical account of the creator. In one of the longest hymns of the first circle, this sage begins by asking about the first-born: 'Whoever has seen the first-born when the boneless cared for the one with bones? It is from the earth that the life-breath (*prāṇa*) and blood came into being. But wherefrom did the Atman come? Which knower of truth can I approach to unravel this mystery?'⁴ Here, the sage Dirghatamā speaks about the gross, the subtle and the subtlest.

(in *Mīmāṃsā Sūtra*, 21.33) that all that is other than the *mantras* is called *brāhmaṇa*, thus including *āranyaka* and *upaniṣad* in the *brāhmaṇa* portion. The *mantra* portion is also called *saṁhitā*. In the *saṁhitās* we have hymns (*sūktas*) of varying lengths and metres addressed to various deities. Each *sūktā* has one or more deities and a *ṛṣi*.

4. *Ko dadarśa prathamam jāyamānam
asthanvantam yadanasthā bibharti;
Bhūmyā asurasṛgātmā kva svit
ko vidvānsamupagāt praṣṭumetat.*

—*R̥g Veda*, 1.164.4. [Hereafter, RV]

2. cf. Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (London: Bantam Books, 1997).

3. The standard definition of Veda is *mantrabrāhmaṇayorveda-nāmadheyam* (Āpastamba, *Śrautasūtra*, 24.1.316). That means, the *mantra* and *brāhmaṇa* portions only constitute the Veda. Therefore, great sages like Jaimini say

He inquires about the Self, and speaks of the subtle (boneless) and gross (with bones). He also mentions the first-born (*prathamam jāyamānam*). He further says, 'I am ignorant, and I inquire because I don't understand anything. These truths are hidden even from the gods.' Using the metaphor of the sun (*āditya*), the sage glorifies the supreme Being, who is the creator according to him. Repeatedly confessing his own ignorance, this humble sage compares the creator with the one 'who has made the six worlds stand, and who is eternal', and asks, 'Are the two one and the same?'⁵ The real nature of this sun is shrouded in mystery, he adds. Dirghatama goes on to say how the worlds are controlled, how the twelve months and six seasons perform their actions, and so on. 'Ten (forces) together hold the earth up in position,'⁶ he says, to which commentators add that the ten 'forces' are the ten corners.

The next sage of the *Ṛg Veda* to speak about creation is Agastya. He expresses wonder: 'Of the two—heaven and earth—which one was created first? Which one came later? Why have they been created? O sages! who knows about this? Without depending upon anything else, these two are supporting the whole universe and changing always like day and night.'⁷

Sage Kavaṣa is the next sage to be astounded at this gigantic creation. He asks: 'Which one was the forest? What was that tree? Using what instruments were this world and the higher ones created?'⁸ This is not to say that some wood of some forest must have been used (of which this sage is ignorant) to

create the universe, or that the ladles, spoons, etc used to perform sacrifices is what is intended. Not that, of course. This is ironically saying that nothing absolutely could have been used to create the universe. No instrument can bring about such a wonder. Going further still, the sage probably means that the universe has no material (*upādāna*) cause behind its coming into being. Was it created out of nothing, then?

Continuing further, the sage Kavaṣa says that the two worlds, this one and the higher one, are never old and decaying (*ajare*). In the subsequent mantra, the sage glorifies the creator: 'These two worlds are themselves not the end. There is something still higher. It is He [or, That] who protects the earth and heaven. He is the giver of food (*svadhāvān*). He brought forth his pure skin, ie body (*pavitram tvacam*), even before the horses of the sun had begun to carry the latter.'⁹ This is a great mantra which tells about the greatness of the maker of the universe. The creator is ancient. He was there even before the sun began revolving around; for, the sages perhaps thought that the earth was stationary and the sun moved around it, causing day and night. He produced His pure body even before the sun was there. Incidentally, Viśiṣṭādvaita considers the world as the body of the Lord, and He is called the Embodied One (*śarīrin*). He is the owner of food, which means that He is the source of everything. He is not only the creator but is the protector of creation also. Thus, Kavaṣa says that this world and the higher one are not the only ones — they are not there all by themselves. There is some superior force, something higher, which is the source of everything. This hymn has been addressed to Viśvadeva, and commentators say that this Viśvadeva is the Lord of the universe. We shall see how the development of ideas took place further in the *Ṛg Veda* in the next issue. □

5. RV, 1.164.6.

6. RV, 1.164.14.

7. *Katarā purvā katarāparayolī*

kathā jāte kavayaḥ ko vi veda;

Viśvātmanā bibhrto yadhdha

nāma vivartate ahanī cakriyeva. RV, 1.185.1.

8. RV, 10.31.7.

9. RV, 10.31.8.

God's Accessibility

PRAVRAJIKA SHUDDHATMAMATA

Pravrajika Shuddhatmamata highlights four qualities of the Lord with suitable anecdotes and examples in the following article.

Such are the blessed qualities of the supreme Lord that even those sages whose sole delight is in the Self, and whose bonds of ignorance have been severed, offer spontaneous worship to Lord Hari. (*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, 1.7.10)

Those who understand that God is the supreme goal of life also know that to realize that goal we must make God the constant object of our thoughts. But how do we think of Him? What do we think of? According to Vedānta, Brahman, the ultimate Reality, has two aspects. In one aspect Brahman is *nirguṇa* — that is, it is without any form, without any qualities or attributes. It is *Saccidānanda* (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute). Then in another aspect Brahman is *saguṇa* — with qualities and attributes. And, as Sri Ramakrishna says, *saguṇa* Brahman can either be with form or without.

Why does God assume qualities and forms? Sri Ramakrishna used to give the example of water and ice: 'Satchidananda is like an infinite ocean. Intense cold freezes the water into ice, which floats on the ocean in blocks of various forms. Likewise, through the cooling influence of bhakti, one sees forms of God in the Ocean of the Absolute. These forms are meant for the bhaktas, the lovers of God. But when the Sun of Knowledge rises, the ice melts; it becomes the same water it was before. Water above and water below, everywhere nothing but water.... But you may say that for certain devotees God assumes eternal forms. There are places in the ocean where the ice doesn't melt at all. It assumes the form of

quartz.'¹

The only answer then is that God assumes qualities and forms for our sake. And through this we get some hint of his love for us and his desire to intervene in our lives to draw us to him. According to Pillai Lokācārya, God manifests four special qualities to help devotees take refuge in him. These are affection (*vātsalya*), lordliness or ownership (*svāmitva*), friendship or affability (*saūṣilya*), and accessibility (*saubhāgya*). Commenting on this, Maṇavālamāmuni says:

Affection (*vatsalya*) is the attitude of a cow towards her calf, where she accepts its defects with relish, gives it milk and nourishes it, and guards it from all who come near, with her horns and hooves.

Lordliness or ownership (*svamitva*) refers to the close relationship [between the Lord and the soul] which is the reason why the Lord remains and does not leave [the soul], guarding his role [as owner and Lord] even if the *cetanā* [soul] is averse to him.

Affability (*saushilya*) refers to how eagerly he stoops down to a level equal with everyone else and mingles with them flawlessly, thinking that it is for his own benefit, without expecting anything from them. This he does so that those who see the majesty of the Lord ... will not shrink back, thinking how puny they are [com-

1. Swami Nikhilananda (tr.), *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1986), p. 191. [Hereafter, *Gospel*.]

pared to him]

Accessibility (*saulabhya*) refers to how he not only makes himself visible, but accessible so that [cetanas (souls)] can take refuge in him if they see him.²

Besides these four qualities, the Lord also manifests *jñāna*, knowledge, and *śakti*, power, 'which make it easy for him to act [to save] the one who has taken refuge in him.'³ According to the *Śrī Vaiṣṇavas* *jñāna* means the Lord's ability to know everything about each soul, including how to bring about the soul's surrender to himself. And *śakti* means his ability to uplift the souls and free them from their bondages.

Saulabhya

The most important of these qualities is *saulabhya*, accessibility. It reconciles God's transcendent state with the state in which he manifests himself for the sake of his devotees. The Sri Vaisnavas give the example of an elephant and a lame man. The elephant is so big that there is no way the lame man can climb on its back. But this huge elephant can kneel down, or even lie down if necessary, and the lame man can then easily climb on it. Similarly, though we can hardly fathom God's infinite nature, he, out of love and compassion, assumes forms and even descends to the realm of human beings, living as one of us; yet he still retains all of his divine glory just as the elephant remains an elephant whether it stands or kneels. In this way, God becomes easily accessible (*saulabhya*).⁴

The quality of *saulabhya* is so important that, according to the Sri Vaisnavas, the Lord makes himself accessible even through images. As Manavalamamuni says: 'The culmination of [the Lord's] accessibility — which in this word is said to facilitate taking refuge [in Him] — is the *arcāvatāra*; here he takes as his holy form [an image] which those who depend on him find delightful and [he] dwells in it continually'⁵ Unlike his manifestations as an Incarnation (such as Rama and Krishna), which are limited in time, the Lord is always easily accessible through his images—that is through his *arcavataras*.

This is not to say, however, that unless God incarnates himself during our lifetime, we can only see him in an image. To the devotees, God is always manifest in the heart, and through meditation we can see him there. But we have to want to see him. Ramakrishna once said: 'But you should remember that the heart of the devotee is the abode of God. He dwells, no doubt, in all beings, but he especially manifests himself in the heart of the devotee. A landlord may at one time or another visit all parts of his estate, but people say he is generally to be found in a particular drawing-room. The heart of the devotee is the drawing-room of God.'⁶

Vātsalya

According to Ramanūja, the Lord is '*āsrita-vātsalya-vivaśaḥ* — one who is overwhelmed by his *vatsalya* (tender protective love) for the devotee who is absolutely dependent on him. The use of the term *vatsalya* gives a further depth of meaning to the expression. A *vatsa* also means a calf, and *vatsalya* therefore means the self-forgetting protective love that a cow shows towards its newborn calf.'⁷

Through the quality of *vatsalya*, the Lord

2. Patricia Y. Mumme (tr.), *The Mumukṣāppati of Pillai Lokacharya with Manavalamamuni's Commentary* (Bombay: Anantacharya Indological Research Institute, 1987), p. 120. [Hereafter, *Mumukṣāppati*.]

3. *Mumukṣāppati*, p. 121.

4. Adapted from, Swami Tapasyananda, *Bhakti Schools of Vedānta* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1990), pp. 49-50. [Hereafter, *Bhakti Schools*.]

5. *Mumukṣāppati*, p. 122.

6. *Gospel*, p. 133.

7. *Bhakti Schools*, p. 82.

assures us that he will never reject those who seek refuge in him, no matter what we may or may not have done during our life. God is only interested in our love for him, nothing else. Ramakrishna once said: 'God very much relishes the bhakti of the poor and the lowly, just as the cow relishes fodder mixed with oil-cake.... God is fond of his devotees. He runs after the devotee as the cow after the calf.'⁸

Svāmitva

Through the quality of svāmitva, the Lord makes his claim on the soul, whether the soul wants him or not, and does not let go. He is the 'Hound of Heaven,'⁹ from whom we can never escape — no matter how hard we try.

Sundarar was a young brahmin of ninth-century Tamil Nadu who had been brought up like a prince by the local ruler. On the day he was to be married, an old man, walking with the help of a bamboo stick, suddenly appeared and told the people gathered for the celebration to stop the wedding. Sundarar, he said, could not be married. Sundarar was his slave — and he had a deed to prove it.

Some people thought it was all a joke. Others were shocked — not the least of all Sundarar, who exclaimed, 'You're mad! You're insane!' But as this strange man was quite insistent, the whole marriage party accompanied him to a neighbouring village to see his document. There the old man pulled out a palm-leaf deed, signed by Sundarar's grandfather. Everyone looked at it carefully, and they had to agree, it did look genuine. 'But who are you? Where do you live?' they asked. Motioning for them to follow, the old man walked inside a nearby Shiva temple and disappeared. Sundarar understood — he was bonded to Shiva.

Sauśīlya

If God manifests all of his divine glory when he assumes a form, it would be very difficult to love him or to think of him as an object of devotion. Seeing Sri Krishna's universal form, Arjuna was terrified and he begged Krishna to assume his previous form. So God has not only the quality of saulabhya, accessibility, he also has the quality of saushilya — that is, he interacts with his devotees in a personal way. 'It is said that God loves such devotees more than Himself and humbles Himself before them abandoning His majesty (*gāmbhīrya*).'¹⁰

Saushilya then is probably the Lord's most endearing quality. Saushilya is Krishna's being tied with a rope by his mother Yasoda. It is Rama crying over the death of his 'father,' the bird Jatayu. It is Gopala weeping to Ramakrishna's devotee Gopaler-Ma for a pillow. It is Christ washing the feet of his disciples. It is the Divine Mother helping Ramprasad repair his fence. It is Ramakrishna's lila with his devotees.

Latu was an illiterate servant boy working in the house of Ramakrishna's disciple Ramchandra Datta. After meeting Ramakrishna, Latu [later, Swami Adbhutananda] became so drawn to him that Ramchandra allowed him to stay with the Master [Ramakrishna] to serve him. Sometimes, however, out of the Master's love the reverse happened — Ramakrishna served Latu.

Latu would never begin the day without first seeing Ramakrishna and saluting him. One morning for some reason he did not see the Master when he first woke up; so he shouted, 'Where are you?' 'Wait a minute — I am coming,' Sri Ramakrishna answered. Latu kept his hands tightly pressed to his eyes until the Master came. Then he took away his hands and bowed

8. *Gospel*, p. 156-57.

9. From a poem by Francis Thompson.

10. *Bhakti Schools*, pp. 82-3.

down to his feet. Another morning when he did not see the Master right away, Latu again called for him to come to the room. But this time the Master answered by asking Latu to come outside. Latu walked out on the western veranda and saw the Master in the flower garden. Latu asked him, 'Sir, what are you doing?' 'Yesterday a devotee brought a pair of sandals for you,' answered the Master 'and I can find only one of them. A jackal may have taken the other, so I am looking for it.' Latu said in a plaintive tone: 'Sir, please come here. Don't search for that sandal.' 'But I shall feel sorry if you can't wear these new sandals,' replied the Master, 'since it was only yesterday that the devotee brought them.' Latu anxiously said: 'Sir, please stop. If you keep looking for my sandal, it will be harmful for me. My whole day will be spent in vain.' ... Ramakrishna responded: 'Do you know what day is really spent in vain? That day when the Lord's name is not chanted.'¹¹

Arjuna's Charioteer

According to Manavalamamuni, Sri Krishna especially manifested his qualities of vatsalya, swamitva, saulabhya, and saushilya in his role as Arjuna's charioteer.¹² As we might wonder how all this would be possible for someone who merely drives a chariot, let us first look at what made up the duties of a charioteer in those days, and then look at one scene from the *Mahābhārata*.

Besides protecting the warrior with his skill in driving, a charioteer had to take care of the horses. This meant feeding them and giving them water, and also taking care of the wounds they sustained during the battles and making sure they did not get too tired. Then

he had to stock the chariot with plenty of weapons of various kinds — bows and arrows, swords, shields, maces, darts, etc — for different situations. In addition, he acted as an attendant of the warrior between battles. And, if he was experienced enough, he might even give the warrior advice — as Indra's charioteer, Mātali, did for Rama when Rama was fighting Ravana. All of this Krishna did — besides preaching the *Gītā*. One scene in particular illustrates this:

It is the thirteenth day of the war at Kurukshetra. Here the author of the *Mahabharata* has used a wonderful dramatic device — silence against noise. But this is not a silence of peace. It is more like the eerie calm in the eye of a hurricane. It is a silence of grief that grows deeper and deeper, culminating in a silence of yoga.

From the roar of the battlefield — a roar filled with the trumpeting of elephants, the neighing of horses, the clashing of swords against swords and chariots against chariots, the blowing of conches, the shouting of men, the twanging of bowstrings, and even the beating of drums — Krishna drives the great hero Arjuna back to their camp. On the way, Arjuna sees bad omens and is very worried. Then as they approach the camp, he becomes more worried. Ordinarily as they return they are greeted with great joy and enthusiasm — with music, drums, and conches. But on this day the whole camp is quiet. Everyone seems to be stricken with grief. Krishna already knows what has happened, but Arjuna does not.

When Arjuna does not see his son Abhimanyu come to greet him as he always did, his anxiety grows. 'Where is Abhimanyu?' he asks. Everyone is silent. He then understands — Abhimanyu, the darling of the Pandavas, the son of Arjuna by Krishna's sister Subhadra, has been killed. In Arjuna's state of grief and anger, only Krishna and Yud-

11. Swami Chetanananda, *God Lived with Them* (St. Louis: Vedanta Society of St. Louis, 1997), pp. 401-02.

12. *Mumukṣāppati*, p. 165.

hishthira dare approach him. Yudhishthira then relates the whole story of Abhimanyu's great heroism and his death by unfair means after being surrounded by seven of the best Kaurava warriors, including Drona and Karna.

When Arjuna learns that it was Jayadratha who had single-handedly held the rest of the Pandavas back and kept them from rescuing Abhimanyu, he is furious.¹³ Almost bursting with grief and rage, he vows that if he does not kill Jayadratha before sunset the next day, he will immolate himself in fire. Krishna scolds Arjuna for his rashness. 'You should have consulted me first,' he says. 'There are spies in both camps, and for certain the Kauravas will learn of your vow. Tomorrow they will have their whole army arranged in such a way to protect Jayadratha that you will not be able to reach him.'¹⁴

Arjuna, however, is not only confident of his own skill, he is also confident of Krishna's grace. 'Through thy grace, O Holy One, what is there unattainable by me in battle?' he says.¹⁵

13. During the Pandavas' exile in the forest, Jayadratha had at one time abducted Draupadi. Though the Pandavas wanted to kill him then, they did not as he was Dhritarashtra's only daughter's husband, and therefore like a brother to them. Instead they humiliated him, thereby causing him to seek revenge.

14. Another problem with killing Jayadratha was that Jayadratha's father had once uttered a curse, saying that the person who would cause his son's head to roll on the ground would have his own head shattered. Krishna averted this by having Arjuna shoot Jayadratha's head onto Jayadratha's father's lap. The father was sitting in meditation at the time and was unaware of what had fallen on his lap. When he got up, he caused his son's head to roll on the ground and his own head was shattered.

Arjuna then goes to his tent, and Krishna is asked to try and console his sister Subhadra, as well as Uttara, Abhimanyu's young wife, and Draupadi, who loved Abhimanyu as much, or more, than her own sons. Krishna is the only one who can comfort them. No one else can do it.

After that, Krishna enters Arjuna's tent, where quietly, as if in worship, he puts his grief-stricken friend to bed. '[Krishna] touched water, and spread (for Arjuna) on the auspicious and even floor, an excellent bed of *kuśa* blades that were of the hue of the *lapis lazuli*. And keeping excellent weapons around that bed, he adorned it duly with garlands of flowers and fried paddy, perfumes and other auspicious articles.'¹⁶

But before going to bed, Arjuna also has his worship to do — to both Krishna and Siva. '... having smeared Madhava with perfumes and adorned [him] with flower garlands, [Arjuna] presented unto Mahadeva the nightly offering.' After that, Krishna, 'with a faint smile,' softly bids him goodnight, saying, "'Blessed be thou, O Partha, lay thyself down, I leave thee.'¹⁷

The camp is still. Everyone has gone to bed, but no one can sleep. Everyone's thoughts are on Arjuna and the terrible vow he has taken. All are silently praying for his success.

Krishna also retires to his tent with his own charioteer, Dāruka. But his whole mind now is on how to save Arjuna. 'And the illustrious one (Kesava), of eyes like lotus petals, began for Partha's sake, to think of various means that would dispel (Partha's) grief and anxiety and enhance his prowess and splen-

15. K.M. Ganguli (tr.), *The Mahabharata* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1993), Drona Parva, Sec. LXXVI, p. 148.

16. Ibid., Sec. LXXIX, p. 152.

17. Ibid.

dour. Of soul wrapt in yoga, that supreme Lord of all, viz Vishnu of wide-spread fame, who always did what was agreeable to Jishnu [Arjuna], desirous of benefitting (Arjuna), lapsed into *yoga* and meditation.¹⁸

That night Arjuna has a strange dream. Krishna, through his yogic state, takes Arjuna to the top of a mountain (most likely Kailasa), where they meet Siva and obtain from him his blessings, along with the Pasupata weapon. There Arjuna 'beheld the offerings he made every night to Vasudeva lying by the side of the Three-eyed Deity [Siva].'¹⁹ The next morning, 'Hṛṣikeṣa [Krishna], like a charioteer (by profession), began to equip that car bearing [on its pennant] the mark of the prince of apes [Hanuman] and belonging to that foremost of car-warriors (viz Arjuna).'²⁰

This was Arjuna's charioteer. It is no wonder then that Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, once said to Krishna:

O Hṛṣikeṣa (Lord of the senses), even as you delivered Devaki (your own mother), who had been shut up in prison for a long time by the wicked Kamsa and was overcome with grief, so did you, O almighty Lord, repeatedly save me along with my sons from a series of calamities. ... May calamities befall us at every step through eternity, O Teacher of the world; for it is in adversity alone that we are blessed with your sight, which eliminates the possibility of our seeing another birth.²¹ □

18. Ibid., pp. 152-53.

19. Ibid., Sec. LXXXI, p. 158.

20. Ibid., Sec. LXXXIV, p. 163.

21. C.L. Goswami (tr.), *Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana* (Gorakhpur: Gita Press, 1995), Vol. 1, p. 29 [verses 1.8.23 & 25].

Harinath's Doubt

HARI: 'Why is there so much suffering in the world?'

MASTER: 'This world is the *līlā* of God. It is like a game. In this game there are joy and sorrow, virtue and vice, knowledge and ignorance, good and evil. The game cannot continue if sin and suffering are altogether eliminated from the creation.'

HARI: 'But this play of God is our death.'

MASTER (*smiling*): 'Please tell me who *you* are. God alone has become all this—*māyā*, the universe, living beings, and the twenty-four cosmic principles. "As the snake I bite, and as the charmer I cure." It is God Himself who has become both *vidyā* and *avidyā*. He remains deluded by the *māyā* of *avidyā*, ignorance. Again, with the help of the guru, He is cured by the *māyā* of *vidyā*, Knowledge.'

—*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 436.

In Fond Remembrance of Brahmachari Jnan Maharaj

TARAKNATH ADHYA

This article by Sri Taraknath Adhya, who has to his credit two books in Bengali, Kathāprasaṅge Jnān Maharāj and Jnān Maharājer Sānnidhye, is the result of his long association with Jnan Maharaj, a monastic disciple of Swami Vivekananda, from 1945 to 1963. In his narrative one sees the unmistakable stamp of the touch of Swamiji on the life of Brahmachari Jnan Maharaj.

The role played by Brahmachari Jnan Maharaj in the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement is a memorable one. His whole life was dedicated to the 'man-making' mission of Swamiji, and this dedication was in fulfilment of his illustrious guru's wishes. The last of the monastic disciples of Swamiji, Brahmachari Jnan Maharaj passed away on 23 March 1963. On his passing away, an excellent tribute was paid to him in an obituary which appeared in the Baishak 1370 issue of the *Udbodhan*, the Bengali organ of the Ramakrishna Order. Translated into English, it reads:

With deep sorrow we announce that at 00.25 a.m. of 23 March (by Indian convention, night of 22 March at 12.25), revered Jnan Maharaj passed away at the age of about 86 years. He was ailing for a long period due to old age and finally had an attack of pneumonia.

In 1901, he joined the Ramakrishna order at Mayavati and thereafter came to Belur Math, where he stayed till the last day of his life. For a brief period, however, he worked at the Udbodhan Office as assistant to Swami Suddhananda, helping him in the work of organizing the *Udbodhan* during its initial stages. He was for some time engaged in the performance of the worship of Sri Ramakrishna at Udbodhan and in performing relief works.

Because of his sweet temperament, Jnan Maharaj was especially dear to students. He

was their friend, philosopher and guide in one. He spread the ideals and the message of Swamiji among young men and students. As a result, two Ashramas were established in the district of Howrah: one at Khurut and the other at Bantra.

The void that has been caused by his death cannot easily be filled. He was Swamiji's initiated disciple (*mantra sisya*), and with his death has passed away the last disciple of Swamiji.

Om. Śāntiḥ! Śāntiḥ!! Śāntiḥ!!!

What follows is a brief account of the life of Jnan Maharaj. His pre-monastic name was Jnanendranath Bandyopadhyay. He was the eldest son of his parents. Although their ancestral house was at Baranagar, Calcutta, where his childhood days were lived, his boyhood days and early youth were spent at Monghyr, Bihar. This change of residence became necessary because his father, a railway employee on a transferable job, was transferred to the Railway Audit Office at Jamalpur.

Jnan Maharaj, who was known to be an intelligent student, had his formal education at Monghyr. With the passing of years, his inborn spiritual tendencies began to manifest more and more. However, the turning point in his life was occasioned by the untimely death of his mother when he was only eleven or twelve years of age. This tragic event filled his tender heart with profound grief. We can

imagine how great was Jnan Maharaj's devotion to his mother when we recall what he said one day in the course of his conversation with us: Had his mother been living, it might not have been possible for him to renounce the world. The sudden death of his dear mother led him to ponder on the mystery of life and death. He began to lose interest in his academic studies and got more and more absorbed in the study of holy scriptures, and in the performance of spiritual and humanitarian activities.

As years rolled on, Jnan's father watched helplessly and with dismay his son's indifference to worldly pursuits and his growing interest in spiritual practices and social service—above all, his all-consuming passion for a life of renunciation. His father tried all possible means to make his son change his mode of thinking. He managed to get Jnan employed in the Railway Audit Office. Thereafter, he made a determined effort to bind his son to worldly life by getting him married. But Jnan had already made up his mind and was not to be swayed easily. He was not to fall into the snares of worldly life. He had once fled from home, though before he could go far he was located and brought back. That memory was with Jnan. So this time, when he got an inkling of his father's plan, he decided to flee to the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, in the Himalayas, sufficiently far away from home.

In those days there was the news of the glorious achievements of Swami Vivekananda in the western world. This kindled the fire of renunciation in his heart and, faced with the prospect of a marriage alliance, there arose a keener desire to renounce the world and follow in the footsteps of the great Master, Swami Vivekananda. When he heard that the latter was returning to India, he felt an irresistible urge to meet him at any cost. But as to how this meeting was to take place, he was not aware then.

It was the cold, winter month of December 1900 when Jnan finally left home. Neither

inclement weather nor any other obstacle stood in the way to deter him from undertaking his journey to the holy Himalayas, the abode of Siva and the land of many spiritual revelations. After an arduous journey, he reached the haven of his dream, the Mayavati Ashrama, and just a few days after that, his Master, Swami Vivekananda, arrived there.

Upon his return to India after the second visit to the West, Swami Vivekananda went to the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, on 3 January 1901, chiefly to comfort Mrs Sevier, whose husband had passed away not long ago. He stayed there till the morning of 18 January 1901. Swamiji took kindly to the young spiritual aspirant Jnan, and expressed delight on noticing his strong physique, fearlessness and implicit obedience. It was during this short stay at Mayavati that Swamiji gave initiation to Jnan. It may be presumed that Jnan always considered the details of the talks he had with Swamiji or the specific instructions Swamiji gave about his life's course too sacred to give out to others. On more than one occasion, in reply to queries made by others on this subject, Jnan Maharaj gave only a cryptic answer that Swamiji had wished him to remain always like 'this'. (Did he mean a 'brahmachari' by the expression 'this'?) However, it is known to all that, when Swami Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Order, he enjoined that the life's aim for a monk of the Order would be to live 'for one's own liberation and for the welfare of the world.' This teaching of Swamiji forms the essence of his concept of 'man-making' religion. There is a general belief that Jnan Maharaj's life-long dedication to this 'man-making' mission was in fulfilment of his great guru's wishes.

In the month of April 1901, Jnan Maharaj set out in the company of his senior brother-disciple, Swami Virajananda Maharaj, on a pilgrimage to Kedar and Badri. An interesting account of the journey is given in *The Story of an Epoch—Virajananda and His Times* by Swami Shraddhananda.

The sudden passing away of his guru on

4 July 1902 created a permanent void in Jnan Maharaj's heart. Then followed years of intense *tapasya* and wanderings in the Himalayas at frequent intervals. Even during this early period of his monastic life, Jnan Maharaj was very earnest about helping and guiding young spiritual aspirants who came under his influence. We learn from some of his letters written during that period how he exhorted young men living at far-off places to be restless in their endeavour to realize God, the summum bonum of human life. How soul-stirring was his message even from afar can be judged by the fact that some of these young men later renounced the world and became monks of the Order.

From the very early period of his monastic life, Jnan Maharaj became a well-known figure in the Ramakrishna Order. The general view was that he was not only a disciple of Swami Vivekananda but also a very large-hearted monk of dignified bearing, bestowing liberally his love and kindness on all who visited him, though in the opinion of some he sometimes showed anger as well. Thus, many of those who visited Belur Math sought his acquaintance, and often his guidance in spiritual matters as well as in solving their common day-to-day problems of life. They found in him their 'friend, philosopher and guide' in the truest sense of the expression.

In my early youth, I used to hear a lot about Jnan Maharaj. So, one afternoon, probably in the year 1943, I paid a visit to Belur Math along with a friend of mine, and there I saw from a short distance Jnan Maharaj talking to a group of devotees seated around him. Revered Maharaj was seated on the ground at the eastern end of the open veranda which is to the southern side of the Math building. One coming from outside had just to cross this veranda to enter Jnan Maharaj's room, situated just below Swamiji's room. Today, however, this veranda has a changed look. I was eager to hear what Jnan Maharaj was saying. In response to a devotee's request to throw light on some fundamental spiritual question,

Jnan Maharaj explained the whole matter in his inimitable style. I was simply enthralled. At once I felt that what came out of his lips was not from some books but was the very outcome of his own experience. My heart was filled with profound reverence for him.

One day, early in the month of February 1945, when I was twenty-eight years of age, I had the great fortune of receiving spiritual initiation from revered Swami Virajananda Maharaj. Only a few days thereafter, I sought the acquaintance of Jnan Maharaj. It was beyond my faintest imagination that he would not only readily and benignly fulfil my long-cherished desire but also gave me a hint that I could meet him at regular intervals. It was indeed a blessing for me that this holy association which began immediately upon the commencement of my spiritual journey continued till the last day of Jnan Maharaj's life on earth. At the time of my first meeting with Jnan Maharaj, he was about seventy, still possessing a robust physique and was full of mental vigour, though almost without vision.

All through his life Jnan Maharaj had felt a sort of spiritual bond with the Himalayas. During his conversation with the devotees the talk often drifted to the topic of his wanderings in the Himalayas. To satisfy our curiosity, he would sometimes relate some of his strange experiences during those wandering days. It is worth recounting here a few of these because these reveal some significant traits of his great God-centered personality.

It was a Sunday evening at Belur Math. Myself and another person had earlier prayed to Jnan Maharaj to allow us to be in his holy company for a little longer after the other visitors had left. The evening *arati* in the Sri Ramakrishna temple was just over. The whole atmosphere was calm and serene. We seated ourselves at the usual spot on the veranda adjacent to his room. Maharaj came and seated himself calmly in front of us. He was in an exalted mood. The talk drifted to his travels in the Himalayas. He narrated an incident of great spiritual import. He said:

On one occasion, I was passing along a mountain path. It was late in the evening and getting dark. I was still to go a long distance before I could reach my destination. For me it was a difficult situation. You know, even in those days my eyesight was very weak and the mountain paths, unlike paths in the plains, were not easy to walk. But I had made up my mind to continue my journey without stopping till I reached my destination. I placed myself in the hands of God and trudged along with this thought in my mind that this was going to be a real test of my faith in God. After a short while the thought crossed my mind that although it was quite dark then and I could hardly see anything, still I was walking with my eyes open. How could it then be a real test of my absolute faith in God? That recognition made me shut my eyes and I went on like that the rest of the way. When I opened my eyes, I could see a light before me realized that I had reached my destination.

When we heard this account, our minds were filled with awe and wonder. It prompted us to ponder on its great spiritual significance.

One day, a devotee requested Jnan Maharaj to narrate what happened when on one occasion he had come face to face with a tiger in the Himalayan jungle. Thus requested, Maharaj recounted the situation in the following words:

On that occasion, I was passing all alone through a jungle of the Himalayas when, suddenly, I came face to face with a tiger. The tiger too had not noticed me earlier. It was a sudden happening for both of us. The tiger stared at me and I also stared at the tiger. What else could I do in that situation? Then it so happened that after a few moments the tiger turned away from my direction and silently disappeared into the thick of the jungle. I also continued on my journey.

On another occasion, during his wanderings in the Himalayas, as he was passing

alone through a snowy region at a very high altitude, there came a point when, looking all around him, he could see nothing but snow. He was at a loss what direction he should proceed in. Then he noticed far below, on one side of the mountain, a frozen river. He thought that the only means of finding a way out of this predicament would be to follow the course of the river. So, he lay himself down on the snow and rolled down the mountain slope to where the river flowed. Thereafter, he managed to find a way by following the course of the river.

We heard from Jnan Maharaj that once he made a journey to Nagaland. He told us that in those days a journey to Nagaland was full of hazards.

One more episode should be recounted here in this connection. It vividly brings to light Jnan Maharaj's noble quality of self-denial and his compassionate nature. Once he was on a pilgrimage to Mani Mahesh which entailed a difficult journey. It is said that on the way he found a man in great affliction because he had no warm clothing to protect himself from the severe cold. Jnan Maharaj had only one rug on him. However, he felt so much for the man in distress that, in total disregard of his own need, he gave away his rug to that man to alleviate his suffering.

I was one of a group of devotees who used to meet Jnan Maharaj at regular intervals—generally on Sunday afternoons—to be in his holy company. It is needless to mention here that he was always mindful of the welfare of the devotees. He used to hold talks with us on diverse matters. He would often apportion a part of the time for reading books, periodicals and newspapers. These sittings would generally last till the completion of *arati* in the temple. Then, after taking *prasad*, we would depart.

In his dealings with the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, it was not his method to talk all the time on religion and discuss spiritual matters. While the chief mission of his life seemed to be to bring about a transformation in our

lives in the light of the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, and he often impressed on our minds that God-realization is the goal of human life, his methods of guiding us towards this end were practical. He used to look into the life's problems of every individual devotee and give proper guidance in solving them. His concern for our welfare was so earnest that it never failed to fill our hearts with eternal gratitude. No wonder that whenever and wherever we met together, we would only talk about Jnan Maharaj. His unalloyed love for us had won our hearts completely. Many of his admirers looked upon him as their benefactor *sans pareil*.

During conversation, Jnan Maharaj used to speak in short sentences. It was not his wont to give long discourses on spiritual topics. But whatever he said or taught had a telling effect on his listeners, because it came out from the very depth of his being, thereby carrying with it the weight of conviction. One could often find him engaged in homely talk on every conceivable subject, upon daily happenings in India and abroad. It was all so natural with him.

Jnan Maharaj was by nature very outspoken. He would always call a spade a spade. Often he laid stress on certain rules of conduct like, 'Speech has to be in unison with the mind', 'Find out your own fault instead of finding the faults of others', etc. He liked positive ideas, and gave no indulgence to negative ones. Though his heart was always full of compassion for all, he would occasionally be found harsh in his speech for the good of his hearer. To the devotees, his harshness was sometimes incomprehensible, but soon we realized our mistakes when we came to know the reason behind his anger. He had a loving heart, but on no account would he tolerate pride, falsehood or chicanery.

Our ordinary minds were not capable of knowing the height and depth of Jnan Maharaj's spiritual achievements. What was, however, observed by one and all was that he

commanded great respect from the monks of the Order as from the lay devotees. Some fundamental ideas were very dear to Jnan Maharaj. To him God was synonymous with Truth, and Sri Ramakrishna with God. This calls to our mind an interesting and instructive incident. One day, Sri Baidyanath Shastri, a renowned *Bhāgavata* pundit of those days, had come to Belur Math to give a discourse on the *Bhagavata* in the temple. After his discourse, he went to see Jnan Maharaj. Entering the room, the pundit greeted Jnan Maharaj with the expression, 'Om Namō Narayanaya,' and Jnan Maharaj responded by saying, 'Om Namō Bhagavate Ramakrishnaya.' Thereupon, the pundit made a repetition of 'Om Namō Narayanaya,' and again Jnan Maharaj repeated his favourite mantra, 'Om Namō Bhagavate Ramakrishnaya.' When the pundit repeated his salutation for the third time, Jnan Maharaj not only repeated, 'Om Namō Bhagavate Ramakrishnaya,' but also added, 'Let it be known to you that everything is contained in that mantra.'

The mantra, *Om Namō Bhagavate Ramakrishnaya*, was very sacred to Jnan Maharaj. On 27 January 1963, during his last illness, a senior devotee of the Ramakrishna Order came with some questions and prayed to him earnestly to remove his doubts. Jnan Maharaj assured the questioner that he would answer all his questions. The purport of one of the questions was, did not his (Jnan Maharaj's) idea about Sri Ramakrishna sound like bigotry? Jnan Maharaj firmly answered, 'I have realized that. This idea is the result of my realization. It is not the outcome of bigotry. It is my *chaprash* (I am commanded by God).'

Those who had the good fortune of coming into contact with Jnan Maharaj were charmed by his candour, open-mindedness, breadth of vision, freedom from all kinds of prejudices and, above all, goodness of heart and a genuine concern for all. He would delve deep into the individual problems of people which proved to be impediments in their path to progress towards their goal in life. He took

no respite in acting as the 'friend, philosopher and guide' of many, and considered it to be his sacred task to do everything possible for their welfare. It is really inconceivable how this great man, who was the embodiment of renunciation and whose mind was always immersed in the contemplation of God, could also keep his mind engaged in thoughts of the welfare of others. It will become evident from the following illustration that his mind was accustomed to work simultaneously on different planes. On 11 November 1951, in response to a letter from Swami Devatmananda, who was a great admirer of Jnan Maharaj and the head of a centre of the Ramakrishna Math in the USA, Jnan Maharaj wrote that, all the time, whether in the waking state or in sleep, he remained immersed in divine contemplation.

This capacity for bifurcation of the mind could often be noticed in ordinary matters as well. To give an example: It was a Sunday afternoon. There was a gathering of devotees in his room. At his behest I was reading from a book. While the reading was in progress, a visitor entered and offered his salutations to him, saying, 'Om Namō Bhagavate Ramakrishnaya.' Then Maharaj began talking to the devotee. Naturally, I stopped my reading with the idea of not interrupting the talk. Suddenly, Jnan Maharaj wanted to know why I had stopped reading. In reply I said that

since he was engaged in conversation, I had stopped reading. He asked me to continue, saying, 'You go on doing your job of reading. I have been listening to your reading all the while.'

In one of the Sunday afternoon gatherings in his room, Jnan Maharaj put to us the question, 'What is the meaning of the Bengali word *bhālo-bāsā* (to love)?' He waited a few moments for an answer, and then said, 'The meaning I have made of this word is *bhāloṭe bāsā korā* (to make one's dwelling place in the good).' Jnan Maharaj further said that he had been preoccupied with that thought during the whole of that day. To say the least, the meaning he gave to the word is not only novel, but also spiritually uplifting. Indeed, Jnan Maharaj's life was one of constant love in the shape of doing good to others.

On a certain occasion, Jnan Maharaj feelingly told the devotees that they would understand later on in life what a sadhu's love is like. Of course, they had always felt in their heart of hearts his unalloyed love for them but could not express it in words. Had not their very lives been transformed by his benign influence? How can one ever forget Jnan Maharaj? Even to this day, quite often, unawares, his benevolent image flashes upon our inner vision and fills the heart with unspeakable joy. □

On Seeing a Picture...

Dr. Nanjunda Rao had invited Swamiji, when the latter had come to Madras as an unknown monk, to dine at his residence. Swamiji went, and as he waited, he walked about looking at the pictures hung in the house. Suddenly he stopped before a picture and stood transfixed. Those with him saw tears gather in his eyes and roll down his cheeks. 'What is there in that picture to move you so, Swamiji?' they asked in wonder. He exclaimed with deep emotion in his voice, 'It is my guru, Sri Ramakrishna!' At that time no one knew who Swamiji's guru was.

—adapted from *Days in an Indian Monastery*

Essence of Indian Culture

J. VEERA RAGHAVAN

Sri J. Veera Raghavan, Director, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, New Delhi, and a former Secretary in the Department of Culture of the Ministry of Human Resources Development, highlights the challenges before human beings and concludes that an answer can be found only in the synthesis between the Indian and Western cultures.

The essence of Indian culture is moderation, balance and synthesis. All excesses lead to perversion, destruction and untruth, while moderation leads to humility, broadmindedness, continuity and truth. The continuity of Indian culture over so many centuries, its ability to hold its own and inspire men and women of diverse ethnic, linguistic and other traits has amazed one and all. While Greece, Rome and Egypt are, in terms of culture, only historical names, Indian culture continues to be a living tradition. In this continuity Swami Vivekananda saw the destiny and mission of India, the mission to spiritualize the entire humanity.

Moderation or balance in life's ideals or aims, or *puruṣārthas*—*dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*—comes from a deeper sense of reality and equanimity, based on the understanding of the spiritual as the real. This understanding puts everything in proper perspective.

Like Hinduism, there are also other religions which emphasize the spiritual and the devotional aspects of life. We respect all religions and cultures and see them as different approaches to the same goal, namely, the Divine. This respect for all religions, an Indian trait, was well understood by Emperor Akbar who, in his letter to Shah Abbas Safavi of Persia (Iran), wrote:

The various religious communities are divine treasures entrusted to us by God. We must love them as such. It should be our firm faith that every religion is blessed by Him and our earnest endeavour to en-

joy the bliss of the evergreen garden of universal tolerance.

This *tolerance* went alongside *deep-rootedness* in one's belief and tradition. Once we have this outlook, we are able to look at other ideas, views and ideals with understanding, sympathy and an eye to absorbing what is good in them. This lays the foundation for a true and genuine synthesis.

Nowhere else is this great synthesis so well articulated as in the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad*. It starts with a grand affirmation (1) that whatever exists in this universe is to be seen as Brahman, (2) that one can enjoy the universe only by renouncing it as it appears, in favour of Brahman, the Reality, and not by possessing the names and forms which we perceive. However, having given a clarion call for renunciation, the very next verse declares that it is only by performing action (which really is an interaction with that universe which one renounces) that one may desire to live for a hundred years. Thus renunciation is synthesized with action.

We are in this world and a part of it. We must perform actions as long as we live. But we must act with the full awareness that we are neither in this world nor a part of it, by dwelling on our divine nature.

This broad understanding of life and of its many dimensions led to the concept of *puruṣārthas* or goals which we can broadly relate to the ethical, the economic, the aesthetic and the spiritual dimensions of life. All the four dimensions are important to life. The

pursuit of ethical values, material comforts, beauty in all its forms, and ultimate spiritual Reality are all equally important. Indian culture does not deride one or the other although it sets the pursuit of the ultimate Reality above the rest.

Indian tradition divides life into four stages (*āśramas*)—the student life (*brahmacharya*), life as a householder (*gārhasthya*), life as a recluse (*vānaprastha*), and life as an ascetic (*sannyāsa*). We have also certain duties to perform during each of these stages. The traversal of an individual from one stage to another depends on one's development and potentiality as well as by one's performance of the prescribed duties (*svakarma*). There is thus a freedom for the individual to take to the life of an ascetic from the life as a student, a householder, or a recluse.

For an individual, his *svadharma* or life's mission is partly determined by his genes, partly by his karma at birth (*sañcita* and *prārabdha*) and partly by the environment and opportunities (*kriyamāṇa karma*). And this life's mission will decide the relative emphasis of the human goals.

To understand one's mission or one's duties, one must meditate deeply, understand oneself, and in a disinterested manner pursue the truth as one views it. It is this meditation on the Ultimate that helps us to come to the right conclusions and leads us along the right path.

Indian culture allows for a diversity even in regard to devotion to, and meditation on, the Divine. In the *Bhagavadgītā*, Sri Krishna declares that he regards those as the best among yogins who, fixing their minds on Him, worship Him with devotion and faith.¹ If one is unable to fix the mind steadily on Him, then one should seek to attain Him through the yoga of practice. If one is unable even to practise, then one should perform all actions for His sake. Failing in that also, one should take refuge in Him, be self-controlled

and offer the fruits of all actions to Him.²

Thus people with different dispositions and capabilities—with different *svakarmas* and *svadharma*s—have a variety of ways through which they can develop and progress towards their goal.

Today there is much criticism about 'modern' times as opposed to the 'ancient' good days! We forget that the evil that we see in today's society also existed even in Vedic times. In Hindu mythology we find that God Vishnu had to take many forms to destroy evil. The whole of the *Gītā* exhorts us not to give up fighting for any righteous cause. Sri Krishna says in the *Gītā* (8.7), 'Constantly remember Me and fight.'

Indian culture, however, went deeper and saw that evil arises from the lack of faith in our divine nature which makes us see a world of multiplicity. It gave a name to the attitude of disbelief in spiritual verities—what we now call 'modern' or 'materialistic' or 'agnostic'. That name is *āsuri sampad* (demoniac nature) as opposed to the *daivī sampad* (divine nature). Those possessed of demoniac nature are out of harmony with the Divine and hence have no belief in the Divine. They think that all creation has 'evolved' out of natural causes with no substance behind them. Thinking that there is no 'reality' other than what is perceived through the senses, they totally deny the existence of any super-sensuous Reality. This has its dire consequences: greed, desire, pride and aggression. The *Bhagavadgītā* vividly describes in Chapter 16 the nature of such men and women. It also describes in the same chapter the qualities of men and women with divine nature. We want that our youth should imbibe this divine nature while undergoing modern management education, which without these ethical ideas, may become today a Fagin's³ Academy and can never lead to prosperity or peace. The

2. Ibid., 12.9-11.

3. Fagin is a character in Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* who instructs children in crime.

1. *Bhagavadgita*, 12.2; 6.47.

single greatest threat to the world is not the nuclear bomb but the entrepreneurial greed that seeks to exploit and destroy nature and the human being.

The central cultural crisis of today is to combat this insidious cancer that grows within us almost unawares. It is 'almost unawares' because we are aware of some of its influences which, for instance, are mass consumerism, mass culture, and media. As a well-known writer has pointed out, the world culture today may be defined as a 'mass culture'. Children are conditioned to adopt this mass culture by the media and the peer group and examples set by the parents themselves. Its basis is the ever-growing (false) needs and the ever-growing consumption. And to meet those needs there is an ever-growing immersion in work, competition and struggle. False needs are created by advertising. Misguided persons keep running after the illusory 'golden deer' wasting their precious human lives.

Mass culture, mass consumerism, unlimited economic growth, populism, etc cannot be controlled or combated by *total renunciation* or *asceticism* which are appropriate only for a few. For the majority the path lies through *moderation* and *balance*. Pursuit of wealth and natural comforts is not wrong per se, if that is combined with a deep understanding of our divine nature and mission which then tempers this pursuit. Indian seers understood that even if desires are satisfied, there is no end to them. Indian culture therefore emphasized self-control, a quality to be cultivated from childhood. If we do not get into the habit of indulging in and pampering our desires, and instead learn to chasten our feelings and emotions, and also show respect to all around us, then we are on the right path. Mass culture on the other hand believes in 'fulfilment of desires', a mirage that misleads, and in the aggressive pursuit of that fulfilment, creates a mission to destruction.

In Indian culture, the aesthetic dimension is as important as the utilitarian or material dimension. The pursuit of beauty and of

desire is not prohibited, but they are to be tempered with a link to the spiritual. Indian art in all its varied aspects—sculpture, painting, music, drama and dance—is a dedicated seeking for the divine, a seeking for perfection.

The amazing richness and variety of Indian art, festivals, customs and way of life arise from this broad outlook on life that accepts all natural propensities of the individual as legitimate but seeks to regulate and direct them to the underlying reality of the divine. It is not by aggressive denial, but through humble acceptance, understanding and reasoning that we evolve to higher levels.

It is a great challenge before us to bring a sense of reality and moderation in the current situation. Admittedly, this seems impossible as we are ranged against the most powerful 'enemies' with all their might and money. But the power of Indian culture is no less. It is the power of Reality and Truth, *ṛta* and *satya* (the universal rhythmic order and its expression as truth), the power of *yajña* and *tapas*, and the power of belief in spirituality and rationality that include, and even go beyond, the scientific method. Indian culture had tolerated many superstitions and prejudices but never believed in them entirely, and always sought after a higher rational approach. It synthesized mystic experiences and analysed them through reason and identified the unity as well as the diversity that exist together. It is only through this power of reason or rationality that so strongly appeals to the youth that the next generation will be able to combat the menace of mass or popular culture and produce a new triumph for moderation, tolerance, truth and peace.

Conclusion

In the words of Swami Vivekananda,

Political greatness or military power is never the mission of our race; it never was, and, mark my words, it never will be.⁴

...the Indian race never stood for wealth. Although they acquired immense

wealth, perhaps more than any other nation ever acquired, yet the nation did not stand for wealth. It was a powerful race for ages, yet we find that that nation never stood for power, never went out of the country to conquer.⁵

And he adds,

...as far back as the days of the Upanishads we have thrown the challenge to the world: ... 'Not by progeny, not by wealth, but by renunciation alone immortality is reached.' Race after race has taken the challenge up and tried their utmost to solve the world-riddle on the plane of desires. They have all failed in the past—the old ones have become extinct under the weight of wickedness and misery, which lust for power and gold brings in its train, and the new ones are tottering to their fall. The question has yet to be decided whether peace will survive or war; whether patience will survive or non-forbearance, whether goodness will survive or wickedness; whether muscle will survive or brain; whether worldliness will survive or spirituality.⁶

The challenge is to overcome mass culture that, thanks to the power of modern communication, has given rise to an atomized and

anonymous mass which is ripe for manipulation, 'a mass market for mass media which can be catered for only by forms of mass culture'. 'The mass audience is there to have its emotions and sensibilities manipulated, to have its needs and desires distorted and thwarted, to have its hopes and aspirations exploited for the sake of consumption.' The result of this culture is untold human suffering, mental and moral distress, terrorism and mindless violence, greed and discontent on an unprecedented scale as well as the destruction of environment. The historic destiny of Indian culture is to save humanity through (1) emphasis on cultural balance in life, and (2) being rooted in spirituality.

This requires that, contrary to our past history, we should adopt a worldwide approach; for, the demoniac approach has its main support and strength outside and it is there that the battle must be joined, even as the powerful media bring that battle to the most isolated of our villages and to every nook and corner of India—a situation we never before faced in our long history. We must synthesize what is good in the world culture—its science and technology, its innovative spirit and its energy—with what is best in our culture. This is the righteous war (*dharma yuddha*) of today. As Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavadgītā* (2.32), 'It is the blessed among warriors who face a war like this.' □

4. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 3, p. 108.

5. *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 74.

6. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 314–15.

On His Birth Anniversary...

I am bringing to Europe ... the fruit of a new autumn, a new message of the Soul, the symphony of India, bearing the name of Ramakrishna. It can be shown that this symphony, like those of our classical masters, is built up of a hundred different musical elements emanating from the past.... The man whose image I here evoke was the consummation of two thousand years of the spiritual life of three hundred million people.

—Romain Rolland

Harmony: The Fundamental Aspect in Vivekananda's Practical Vedanta

DR. RAGHUNATH GHOSH

This article is based on a paper presented by Dr. Raghunath Ghosh at a seminar organized by Utkal University, Bhubaneswar. Dr. Ghosh is Professor of Philosophy, University of North Bengal, Darjeeling.

I

Swami Vivekananda, an Advaitin of the highest order, has highlighted some principles of Vedanta which can bring about harmony among all people. He realized the truth of Vedanta and said that the theories of Advaita Vedanta are not to be confined to the sastras only, but that they should and can be applied in our daily life for the fulfilment of our needs and for the enrichment of our lives. These principles, if practised and implemented properly, can give rise to peace and harmony in society and can provide the younger generation with self-confidence, courage, vigour, strength and a broad outlook. Swamiji has taken up some aspects of Advaita Vedanta and has given his own novel interpretation, keeping the spirit intact. This article is an attempt to bring to focus the much-needed concept of harmony which is the fundamental theme of Vivekananda's philosophy.

II

In Swami Vivekananda's philosophy, an individual is not considered as an ordinary human being but potentially as powerful as the Divine. Here he has tried to bring about harmony between an individual as he appears and the divine being that he actually is. This view is found in the dictum, 'Jiva, the individual, is verily Brahman' (*jīvo brahmaiva nāparaḥ*). Each and every human being — even the fallen — is respectable, powerful, and eternal like the Divine. It has been stated in Advaita Vedanta that each and every object

in this universe, including the human being, is a manifestation of Brahman: all that exists is verily Brahman (*sarvam khalvidam brahma*). If an individual realizes Brahman, he becomes identified with Brahman: a knower of Brahman verily becomes Brahman (*brahmaveda brahmaiva bhavati*), though until then he labours under the misunderstanding that he is a limited being. In order to point out this very truth to the bound soul, the Upanishad says, 'That thou art' (*tat tvam asi*). Swami Vivekananda laid emphasis on this *mahāvākya* which identifies an individual with Brahman and has given a broader interpretation to it. If an individual is Brahman, if someone is potentially identical with Divinity, he should not and would not think that he is weak, and, as a result, he will have much strength and vigour in him, which according to Swami Vivekananda is very much needed for the people of any nation. Not quaking before an almighty God who sits in judgement of our actions, but thinking of oneself as powerful, fearless, as being identified with Divinity—this is positive or true religion. Vivekananda has said that one should think under all circumstances, both good and bad, that one is Brahman:

Even at the gate of death, in the greatest danger, in the thick of the battle field, at the bottom of the ocean, on the tops of the highest mountains, in the thickest of the forest, tell yourself, 'I am He, I am He.' Day and night say, 'I am He.' It is the greatest strength; it is religion.¹

This uplifting idea gives us the inspiration to work fearlessly. The Upanishad says that an individual attains fearlessness if he realizes the Self. One forgets this truth during one's sadhana, becomes weak, afraid and a coward, and hence, as said in the Upanishad, 'This Atman cannot be realized by the weak' (*nāyamātmā balahīnena labhyaḥ*). This constant thinking and reposing faith in the truth that 'I am He' will activate a tremendous force or energy which is already within and will also transform the thought into realization. Vivekananda therefore says:

The help came from yourself.... There is no help for you outside of yourself; you are the creator of the universe.... Ever tell yourself, 'I am He.' These are the words that will burn up the dross that is in the mind, words that will bring out the tremendous energy which is within you already, the infinite power which is sleeping in your heart.²

India needed such men to secure freedom to the country. The call of the nation brought forth men who could face death with a smile and cry out *Vande Mataram*. Modern India needs as badly persons having such courage, vigour, and fearlessness which is possible only if one has faith in oneself. Faith in oneself is tantamount to faith in God. Such a faith can provide an individual with a tremendous force which none can resist:

What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills which nothing can resist.... That is what we want, and that can only be created, established, and strengthened by understanding and realizing the ideal of the Advaita, that ideal of the oneness of all.³

Swami Vivekananda has, in this connection, pointed out another aspect of spiritual

truth which is very novel. He says that if someone believes in millions of gods but not in himself, it is all in vain. To become free from the bonds of nature, to become free from weakness, reliance on the Self is highly essential. Our existence and growth depends on clinging to the spiritual basis.

III

According to Swamiji, that action is justified which conduces to universal welfare, peace and happiness. Hence, such actions based on universal considerations bring about harmony and equality among all people. Equality is the way to freedom and inequality is the way to bondage. No person and no nation can attempt to gain physical freedom without physical equality, nor mental freedom without mental equality. 'Ignorance, inequality, and desire are the three causes of human misery, and each follows the other in inevitable union.'⁴

In explaining his philosophy of action, Swamiji has stressed the need for physical and spiritual strength. The former is not neglected in his philosophy but considered as complementary to the latter. Vivekananda's Vedanta does not make us shy away from the world of activity and take to the life of recluses, but it induces us to perform action intelligently. One who is strong in the above-mentioned sense alone can do action for the welfare and happiness of all (*bahujana-hitāya bahujana-sukhāya*). Physical weakness, which is the cause of all our misery, is to be overcome. Physical weakness makes us lazy. We do not exert, we do not love another, we become intensely selfish. Physical strength gives rise to a strong brain which can penetrate the mysteries of soul and nature. Without this physical strength we will have an idle and weak brain which cannot take up any selfless social welfare activity. Instead of performing work without desires people who are weak go in for the fulfilment of desires. That is what we find all around us today. That

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 3, p. 26. [Hereafter CW.]

2. Ibid.

3. CW, vol. 3, p. 190.

4. CW, vol. 2, p. 328.

is why Swami Vivekananda has emphasized that all young people should be strong first and then adopt a religious way of life. According to him, 'You will be nearer to heaven through football than through the study of the Gita.'⁵ The only way to think of oneself as strong is to believe that 'I am the Soul.' This makes us physically, mentally and spiritually strong. The thought, 'I am the Self of all,' makes all our actions motivated by universal love. This conviction is the mother of all unselfish actions. An individual can assert his real nature through the performance of selfless actions. Therefore, Vivekananda says: 'I will tell you in plain language that you work best when you work for others. The best work that you ever did for yourselves was when you worked for others....'⁶

If an individual thinks himself weak — physically, mentally or spiritually — he becomes weak. Every citizen in the West who has achieved material development has done so due to his/her having faith in his/her muscles. The westerner says, 'I can do it,' or 'let me have a go at it.' If likewise Indians and others too have faith in the infinite soul, we can achieve material, mental, moral, intellectual and spiritual development. That is why Swamiji gave us the advice to give up the awful disease of ridiculing everything belonging to our ancient traditional wisdom and of lacking in seriousness. We need to proceed with faith in the spiritual discoveries of the ancient seers.

Vivekananda has considered superstitions as obstacles to the path of action. Those who believe in superstitions are afraid and weak, and hence they cannot do any real work. 'It is fear that is the great cause of misery in the world. It is fear that is the greatest of all superstitions ... it is fearlessness that brings heaven even in a moment.'⁷ This fearlessness comes when one feels that one is

united with the universe. This expression of oneness is called love and sympathy, which is the basis of all morality and ethics. Other persons and objects are considered to be one's own self. Each and everyone in the world is part of me, and hence in hurting another I am hurting myself, and in loving another I am loving myself. This knowledge follows from the *mahāvākya*, *tat tvam asi*. If someone considers all as his own self, looks upon no one else as a stranger, there will be total harmony.

IV

Swami Vivekananda has harmonized between material and spiritual needs. He has given emphasis on both the sides. To him the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta not only quenches our spiritual thirst but it serves the needs of our day-to-day life too, which is also essential.

To Sankara the whole world and an individual's body, mind, sense-organs, etc become illusory after realizing Brahman. In Advaita Vedanta, an individual's body and materialistic world are therefore neglected. Vivekananda has given a new interpretation of Advaita Vedanta after considering its practical aspect. He has taken the human body and the material world as manifestations of Divinity or as real as the Divine. In his philosophy, culture of the body and mind are as important as the manifestation of the Spirit. To him bread is first, then religion. This implies that the material needs are to be met first and thereafter comes religion or spirituality. Thus he has harmonized the material and the spiritual worlds. To him both are to be considered.

Vivekananda himself says that he has brought down the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta from the forest to serve an individual's day-to-day needs. He says: 'What we want is not so much spirituality as a little of the bringing down of the Advaita into the material world. First bread and then religion.'⁸ We generally try to convince ordinary persons

5. CW, vol. 3, p. 242.

6. CW, vol. 3, p. 276.

7. CW, vol. 3, p. 321

8. CW, vol. 3, p. 432.

about religion when what they actually need is food. Dogmas or theories about religion will fall flat if their hunger is not appeased. For this we require a feeling heart. This 'feeling' possesses us automatically if we consider others as our own and if we realize that all persons — rich and poor — are manifestation of the Infinite.⁹ With such an understanding, an individual would not feel greedy for earthly possessions, but would enjoy bliss through renunciation, through sharing with others, which is indicated in the mantra: *Tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā mā grdhaḥ kasyasviddhanam*.¹⁰ In other words, if each and every person has this realization, there will be no room for exploitation of any type in society, and this will usher in an ideal society which Swamiji wanted to establish.

In order to fulfil this mission in life, each and every action performed by us should be for a good cause: for the sacrifice of our little self and for the good of all humanity. Our body is of no use if it is not engaged in the well-being of others. In the same way, the mind which we possess is of no consequence if it is not applied to the well-being of others. Similarly, the sense-organs too are stated as having no causal efficacy if they are not associated with the welfare of others.¹¹ This reminds one of the following mantra of the *Kenopaniṣad*:

*Śrotrasya śrotraṁ manaso mano yad
vāco ha vācaṁ sa u prāṇasya prāṇaḥ;
Cakṣuṣaścakṣur-atimucya dhīrālī
pretyāsmāl-lokāḍ-amṛtā bhavanti.*

Since He is the Ear of the ear, the Mind of the mind, the Speech of the speech, the Breath of the breath and the Eye of the eye, the wise men, knowing Him, giving up the wrong notion of self or dispelling egoism, attain immortality.¹²

This mantra can be interpreted in the

light of Vivekananda's philosophy as follows: the eye becomes the eye in the true sense of the term if it can see to the welfare of all (not only of one's own). In the same way, the mind can be described as mind if it can think of others' well-being. If someone understands the functions of the sense-organs also in this way, he can easily forsake his egotism and can extend his own self to overlap others, which is described as attaining immortality. The eye, mind, etc of such a person become cosmic.

Considering this aspect of human value, Swami Vivekananda says that an individual, when born a human being, should leave an indelible mark in the world. That mark is to become a transformed personality with a cosmic identity.

V

Swamiji has brought harmony between an individual's emancipation as well as that of others. Not only in materialistic thinking, but in spiritual pursuit also, an individual should not seek his own well-being and emancipation neglecting those of others. Swamiji's guru, Sri Ramakrishna, had told him to be as great as a banyan tree so that many persons tormented by worldly cares could take shelter under him. It will make one expand and engulf the entire world. An individual's personal emancipation or freedom is not really freedom if others who are non-different from him are also not free. To Vivekananda freedom or emancipation is to be achieved in and through the freedom and emancipation of others; it is not a selfish self-seeking endeavour or an act of cowardice or escapism. It is spiritual truth made living, made practical.

That the philosophy of Vivekananda is one of harmony is evidenced from the fact that extreme situations are not acceptable to it. If someone engages oneself in meeting the material needs without spirituality, it is not acceptable. On the other hand, seeking spiritual bliss oneself, without caring for the material help others need, is also not desirable.

9. Ibid.

10. *Īśāvāsyopaniṣad*, 1

11. CW, vol. 3, p. 446.

12. *Kenopaniṣad*, 1.2

Vivekananda believed in the salvation of all and not in the salvation of a single individual. He observed:

An ideal which is too high makes a nation weak and degraded.... On the other hand, too much practicality is also wrong.... We must not lower our ideal, neither are we to lose sight of practicality. We must avoid the two extremes.... To go ahead of others in salvation is wrong. One must learn sooner or later than one cannot get salvation if one does not try to seek the salvation of his brothers.¹³

In practical life Sri Ramakrishna also advised Narendranath to be balanced in behaviour after keeping both the extreme situations in view. He narrated a beautiful story. Once a guru asked his snake-disciple to forsake violence. Hence, the snake decided to remain quiet all the time without injuring others by injecting its venom. It could not gather food and grew weak. Cowherds pelted stones at it in order to have some fun. This happened everyday. Once, on repeated questioning by the guru, the snake informed him about the situation also adding that the little boys were not to blame as they did not know its change in attitude. The guru thereupon told the snake that he had asked it to adopt non-violence, but had not dissuaded it from frightening others with the hissing sound if there was a need for it.¹⁴ That is, an individual living in the world should avoid extremes in order to live peacefully. If someone adopts either extreme, of resistance or of non-resistance, he will no doubt suffer due to the absence of balance.

VI

Swami Vivekananda has brought harmony or synthesis between the East and the West. Swamiji said, 'The West is groaning under the tyranny of the Shylocks, and the East is groaning under the tyranny of the

priests; each must keep the other in check.'¹⁵ He declared that the East required the knowledge of science and technology as much or as badly as the West needed the spiritual culture of the East. He said:

Europe, the centre of the manifestation of material energy, will crumble into dust within fifty years if she is not mindful to change her position, to shift her ground and make spirituality the basis of her life. And what will save Europe is the religion of the Upanishads.¹⁶

Thus, he worked for a synthesis between the old and the new — the East and the West.

VII

Another practical aspect of Swami Vivekananda's Vedanta is not mere tolerance but the acceptance of other religious paths. Religious life is a journey from truth to truth, from lower truth to higher truth. We should look upon others with love. So, the Advaita Vedanta of Swami Vivekananda accepts and respects all religious approaches as different paths leading humanity to the same ultimate goal. In the language of Sri Ramakrishna, 'As many faiths so many paths.'

In the words of Dr. Satis Chandra Chatterjee, formerly George V Professor of Indian Philosophy at the University of Calcutta,

Such is Vivekananda's practical Vedanta, a living Vedanta and not a dry and dead theory of the Vedanta. It is the Vedanta of the forests come back to our homes, our city and our society; it is the Vedanta entering into our ordinary life and conduct, it is the Vedanta that may inspire our individual life, social life, national and international life. Swami Vivekananda wants us to carry the eternal message of the Vedanta to every door and to every corner of the world.¹⁷ □

13. CW, vol. 3, p. 447.

14. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1985), pp. 85-86.

15. CW, vol. 3, p. 158.

16. CW, vol. 3, p. 159.

17. Dr. S.C. Chatterjee, in *Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume*, ed. Dr. R.C. Majumdar (Calcutta: Swami Vivekananda Centenary Committee, 1963), p. 281.

Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad

SWAMI SRIDHARANANDA

(Continued from the December 1998 issue)

बृहच्च तद्विव्यमचिन्त्यरूपं
सूक्ष्माच्च तत्सूक्ष्मतरं विभाति ।
दूरात्सुदूरे तदिहान्तिके च
पश्यत्स्विहैव निहितं गुहायाम् ॥

*Br̥hac-ca tad-divyam-acintya-rūpaṁ
sūkṣmāc-ca tat-sūkṣmataram vibhāti;
Dūrāt-sudūre tad-ihāntike ca
paśyatsv-ihaiiva nihitaṁ guhāyām.*
(III.i.7)

It is vast, self-effulgent and of unthinkable form. It is subtler than the subtlest. It shines forth diversely. It is farther away than the far-off, yet It is near at hand in the body. Among sentient beings, It is seated in the secret place and perceived (here) in this very body by those who behold (It).

Immeasurably big is Brahman, and It is *divya*, heavenly, or *dyotanavān*, self-effulgent — not needing another source of illumination for It to be seen or experienced. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that you do not need a lantern to see whether the self-effulgent sun is up in the sky. Similarly, you only need your own awareness to be aware of everything around you. Also, the Atman or Brahman has a form (or nature) which is beyond conception by the normal human consciousness, *acintyarūpaṁ*. It is said in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* that mind and speech return from It without comprehending or measuring It, for, to do this would be to make finite the Infinite. Sri Ramakrishna could not explain to his disciples what his experience was as the *kuṇḍalinī* reached the *viśuddha-cakra*, for the Divine Mother was pressing his mouth. In It there is no relativity, no 'other' to compare or contrast

with. It is just in Itself. The Absolute is indescribable, for there is nothing besides to describe It.

First, it is said that It is *br̥hat*, great. Next it is said to be *sūkṣma*, more minute than the minute. This juxtaposition of opposite ideas, putting together contrary thoughts to arrive at a conclusion, is often pursued as a scriptural convention while teaching the incomprehensible. Here, bigness and smallness indicate Its nature — infinite yet infinitesimal. It is so wide as to encompass all existence, so our minds cannot comprehend It. It is beyond our capacity to conceive on account of Its immensity, yet It is so small as to be invisible. Size and form rest on our concept of space, which does not apply to Brahman; so It is unthinkable. Yet *vibhāti*, ie, It manifests as diverse objects; we are perceiving that very Brahman as various objects in the matrix of space and time.

Again, it is said It is very distant, *dūrāt sudūram*, farther than the far-off, and at the same time, It is within us, as the nearest of the near. The way to find It is to see It well-set or embedded in the secret place, the cavity of the heart of sentient beings. The very expression, 'I am', indicates people's awareness of the real Entity within them. Swami Vivekananda said that the centre of the soul which is a circle whose circumference extends to infinity is in one's own heart. *Vyāvahārika sattā*, ie, the *mithyā* or the illusory world, hides from us this truth that the Atman is the centre of all existences in the world. People are drawn to name, form and utility of things, but the goal is to develop the introspective culture, so that they re-educate themselves to see the core of existence of things. As Sri Ramakrishna said,

the figures depicting incidents in the life of Sri Krishna were all made of wax. The scriptures also say that pottery of all shapes and sizes are but clay. Likewise, it is said that after the destruction of the body-mind consciousness and the merging of the *jīvātman* in the *paramātmān*, when one descends to a lower plane, wherever the mind roams, only the Absolute is seen. *Ihaiva* means this realization comes in this very life, even while one is alive. So, do not make the mistake of searching for It outside, but see It in this very body in this very life.

न चक्षुषा गृह्यते नापि वाचा
नान्यैर्देवैस्तपसा कर्मणा वा।
ज्ञानप्रसादेन विशुद्धसत्त्व-
स्ततस्तु तं पश्यते निष्कलं ध्यायमानः॥

Na cakṣuṣā gr̥hyate nāpi vācā
nānyair-devaiḥ tapasā karmaṇā vā;
Jñāna-prasādena viśuddha-sattvas-
tatas-tu taṁ paśyate niṣkalaṁ
dhyāyamānaḥ. (III.i.8)

It is not grasped by the eyes, not even by speech, nor through the other sense organs, nor by austerity or work (karma). By the favourableness (grace) of knowledge, one's nature getting purified, the meditating person sees Him (the Self) who is without parts.

Regimentation is not a part of Indian tradition. Spirituality does require an element of self-discipline, but as far as thoughts are concerned, each one has been given the freedom to chose his or her own spiritual destiny. Regimentation is not so much in respect of the attitude towards life as it is for directing one's faculties towards a better purpose. The forms of regimentation are *tyāga*, *vairāgya*, *anāsakti*, *nirvāsana*, etc; that is, renunciation, non-covetousness, non-attachment, desirelessness, etc. This discipline is self-imposed for ensuring a better use of the resources within one — that is, for understanding and experiencing Truth. So, everywhere methodologies are

mentioned, and once the choice of method is made, the disciplinary aspects follow suit.

The first two lines of the mantra say, using negation, by *neti mukha*, how the Atman cannot be attained. In perception, the mind moves out through the sense-organs, permeates the object and brings back its imprint, which is then compared to the storehouse of past experiences. Then this object becomes the perception of the eyes. In the same way, the object of ears, nose, tongue, and touch are perceived. The five senses grasp their respective objects. But Atman or Brahman cannot be made an object of my seeing, etc, nor does the *tripuṭi* — the three-pronged structure of seer, seeing and seen — apply here. For, how can It become an object of perception as apart from the seer? Since It is not a perceivable object, It cannot be defined by words. Our capacity to use words and sentences is dependent on acquisition of knowledge through the five organs of perception, which are not operative here; so we are unable to speak about It, describe It or define It in words.

Sri Ramakrishna described his spiritual experiences when his mind reached between the eyebrows, the *ājñā-cakra*: the Divine is, as it were, like a lamp covered by a very fine, polished glass; the glass is transparent but prevents one from touching the flame. Even so, in that state, there is still a partition between the seer and the Divine. But when the awareness reached the topmost plane, the *sa-lasrāra*, Sri Ramakrishna was unable to express his experience. Since It cannot be objectified — cannot be made an object of perception or conception — It is beyond speech. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* says that from that place speech returns along with the mind. In the world of relativity, space-time-utility can be expressed through suggestion, inference, examples, comparison, contrast, etc. But Atman or Brahman is not relative and cannot therefore be expressed by words or grasped by the senses or the mind. Nor can the feeling 'I exist' be defined correctly, as my Self is the eternal

Subject because of whom the entire world is perceived as the object; It, the eternal Subject, can never be objectified.

In the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* it is said that Brahman is to be known by *tapas*: *tapasā brahma vijijñāśasva*. Here, in the *Mundaka-Upanisad*, it is said that Brahman is not attained by *tapas*. Then what is the *lakṣyārtha* of the two teachers in these two places?

When the student was told to perform *tapas* to know Brahman, his first conclusion was that the material body is Brahman. He further pursued *tapas* and concluded in turn that life-breath, mind, intellect, and bliss are Brahman. Still the teacher urged him to go on till he unfolded himself completely in intense joy and started singing. Then why is it said that Brahman is not attained by *tapas*? It is also said that Brahman is not attainable by *karma* (work or performance of duty). *Tapas* also is a kind of *karma*. But then, it is also true that *tapas* and *karma* form the two pillars of spiritual life. How do we understand this? In the process of living our present and earlier lives, we have acquired so many impurities (desires) that they do not allow us to experience our true nature. The mind is compared to an unused mirror which has accumulated a film of dust and lost its reflectivity. Cleansing it is *tapas*, and this is done to bring back the reflectivity of the mind. Though I am aware that 'I am' (*aham asmi*), I think of myself to be an individual *jīva* of such-and-such nature. 'I' is then defined in terms of 'non-I'. Ignorance (*ajñāna*) has an *āvaraṇa-śakti*, covering or veiling power, of not revealing things in their correct perspective, and a *vikṣepa-śakti*, projecting power, which is knowing a thing as it is not (*atasmin tad buddhiḥ*). Atman is first hidden; then It is known as so-and-so, belonging to such-and-such family, caste, nation, etc. By *tapas* we can get rid of this self-imposed ignorance; this is how *tapas* helps in revealing Brahman. But by no sacrificial or ritualistic action (*karma* understood in this sense) can one's true original nature be known. The *parā-vidyā* of knowing Atman is distinct from all

the *aparā-vidyās*. *Tapas* and *karma* have a place in discipline, but not to create *ātma-jñāna*. Rather, they remove obstacles to the experience of the Self, ie, they remove the dirt covering the mirror of the mind — the dirt being non-understanding, misconception, and confusion which prevent us from knowing our true original nature. Also *glāni*, *kaluṣa*, *kārapaṇya-doṣa* (weariness, sin, miserliness), etc are got rid of by *tapas* and *karma*.

Tapas and *karma* cannot create the awareness of Atman or Brahman, for whatever is created in time, disintegrates in time. So, if Atman were attainable by austerity or work (*tapasyā-* or *karma-labhyah*), then It cannot be eternal. But Atman is Eternal (*nityah*), of manifold expressions (*vibhū*), all-pervading (*sarvagataḥ*), and, once attained, It cannot be destroyed. So, by *sadhana* one cannot create the eternal Self, but only wipe away the dirt. Through a dark glass the sun cannot be seen though it continues to exist; only when one removes the glass is the sun seen. *Sadhana* is the removal of the dark glass of ignorance so that the self-effulgent Consciousness can shine forth. Scriptures give the example that when there are ripples in a lake, they prevent us from seeing the bottom and the waves only reflect plants and trees on its bank. Similarly, when the mind is disturbed by ripples of desires, it only reflects the world-objects and we do not have the capacity to go below the mind's surface to see what is at its base. *Sādhana* is meant to keep the mind steady, without disturbance, in a detached (*nivṛtti*) state. The purpose of Yoga is described as the stoppage of the modifications of the mind (*citta-vṛtti nirodhaḥ*).

If the Atman is not *tapasyā-* or *karma-labhyah*, then how does one find It? This is explained in the *iti mukha*, the positive words in the last two lines of the mantra. One of the instruments of realization of the Atman is *jñāna-prasāda* and another is *viśuddha-sattva*. When no dirt (darkness) remains, through the grace and favourableness of the intellect (*prasannatā*), then purity of being is attained.

This *jñāna* means the true and correct perspective of life and world as manifestations of Reality and this understanding cleanses the mind of all dirt. The essence of spirituality, of meditative life, is *prasannatā* or joy which comes from a true knowledge of life and world. The correct perspective is explained by Sankara as free from the fault of likes and dislikes, attachment and aversion (*rāgādi-doṣa-rahitam*). These desires are the root causes of our not knowing 'Who am I?' As the poet says, *Cāḥ camāri cuhāri, ati nīcon ke nīc*. Desire is clubbed here with the lowest of low castes, for it stands between me and my identification with the Atman or Brahman. Thus, by gaining the correct perspective one gets *prasannatā* and *viśuddha-sattva*. There is nothing to disturb the purified mind. As by saturating water with sugar, the tasteless water becomes sweet, even so our being finally manifests the innate divinity which is like that tasteless, colourless, odourless water, by keeping on adding to it the sugar of the idea of the Divine.

Tataḥ, thereafter, one sees (*paśyate*) one's own original nature as '*āyam-ātmiā brahma, aham brahmāsmi*.' This is told using the *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa*; the teacher cannot but use the language of relativity to explain in the domain of relativity something not in the domain of relativity. He makes the point that in the process of deep meditation, *dhyāyamānaḥ*, one comes face to face with the *niṣkala*, pure and perfect, or the indivisible, non-compartmentalizable Self, the majesty of one's Soul, the excellence of one's Being. So long the '*aham asmi*' was linked up with all the dirt around; but, by *jñāna-prasāda* and *viśuddha-sattva*, in *dhyāna*, the *niṣkala-vastu* is realized.

This is another procedure to discipline oneself while undergoing *jñāna-sādhana*. The *dhyāna* (meditative procedure) is inborn in every human being. It is not to be learnt. In the beginning one has to be taught to concentrate on a task, say cooking. A time comes when one becomes such an expert that it can be done without much attention being given

to it, because one has gained so much expertise in meditating during the practice of cooking. A part of the attention can then be diverted to something else without jeopardy to that something one is doing. This doing of something correctly and thoroughly without application of efforts is an aspect of meditation. A scientist also concentrates on his problem and loses track of time and place in thus concentrating. This condition of mind when it is extremely alert on the subject in which it is engaged is called *dhyāna*. The meditator is at one end, the object of meditation is at the other end, and the continuous flow of thought linking the two is *dhyāna*. Here is the object (*dhyeya*) and here am I (*dhyātā*), and the continuous flow of thought between the two is meditation (*dhyāna*): no second object has admission here. It may not merely be a matter of mental discipline. If one's attachment to a worldly object is strong, it becomes a barrier and will prevent other objects from entering the mind and disturbing it. This is not meant by *dhyāna*. So, knowledge of the nature of the Object and love and attention for that Object are very important. Slowly, the time spent in concentrating on the Object or Person increases, till it saturates one's being and the seer (*dhyātā*) becomes one with the seen (*dhyeya*). Continued psychic process of thinking on the Chosen Deity (*Iṣṭa*) is needed for one to lose his separate identity in the *Iṣṭa*.

(to be continued)

His Birthday

This is the day when Mother makes a special revelation of Herself. It is through Mother's power that everything is done. In the present age, Her power is acting through the Master's personality.... Every time I think of him, I am struck with wonder at the greatness of the personality with whom we lived.

—Swami Shivananda

Sri Krishna and the Way of Love

PROF. A.N. DHAR

Prof. A.N. Dhar from Jammu takes up the sublime life and soul-captivating lyrics of Mira, and says that the lyrics 'unmistakably convey to us that she knows her lord, for sure, to be the indwelling Master and the only object of her worship—not the mere image she is fondly attached to.'

In this short paper, I propose to dwell on the significance of Sri Krishna's pervasive image in our Bhakti literature. Towards the end, I shall focus on Mira's love of Krishna as it finds expression in one of her devotional lyrics—in order to illustrate what distinguishes the Way of Love as an approach to the Divine.

The devout, who are conversant with the Hindu scriptures, consider Sri Krishna to be an incarnation of God Vishnu, who assumed the human form as Vasudeva's son to destroy evil and establish *dharma* on earth, what he likewise did in his previous incarnation as Sri Rama. Sri Krishna is also looked upon as a World Teacher (*jagadguru*), whose teachings are systematically presented in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, in the form of a dialogue that has attained wide recognition in the world as a great classic. Introduced as an episode in the *Mahābhārata*, it is at once a scripture of universal relevance and a piece of literature in its own right. Western scholars see it as a characteristically theistic Hindu scripture, valuing it for its richness of thought and systematic exposition of spiritual truths. Considered 'the most important product of the Hindu religious spirit,' the *Gītā* offers to the reader a fine synthesis of the 'strands of pantheism, monotheism, theism and deism.'¹ It is because of its great popularity that the book has been translated into numerous foreign and Indian languages.

In the *Mahābhārata*, Sri Krishna is depicted as the most engaging character, who overshadows all other characters and emerges as the central hero through his wisdom and valour; his qualities as a friend of the weak and oppressed; his playful behaviour as Yasoda's darling child; and as the great favourite of the *gopīs* and cowherd boys. It is no less through his human qualities than through his astounding feats that his divinity becomes manifest to those who adore him as God. His divine humanity consists in his unbounded love for all, his concern for those in distress and the valour he exhibits in performing superhuman tasks, including the destruction of tyrants like Kamsa. All through, we perceive Krishna as a supremely remarkable person, an ideal human being invested with divine qualities—the Divine having 'descended' in a human frame.

Sri Krishna's multifaceted image, corresponding to the diverse roles he played (as depicted in the *Mahābhārata*), has got deeply embedded in the collective psyche of the Hindus. That explains why it is pervasive in our Bhakti literature. It is on this account again that the devotional lyrics or *bhajans* of the popular Bhakti poets, Surdas and Mira, continue to inspire and delight men of faith. It is, however, the *Bhāgavatam*, rather than the *Mahābhārata* strictly, that has been the chief inspiration behind whatever verse that has been produced in Sanskrit, Hindi and other regional languages on the Krishna theme. Most Indian dances, including the *bharatanāṭyam*

1. Lin Yutang (ed.), *Wisdom of India* (Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1956), p. 49.

and the *rāga*-based *bols* of our classical music are devoted to this theme.

For the learned Hindus particularly, Jayadeva's *Gīta Govinda*, too, has acquired a special significance. It dwells on the theme of spiritual marriage between Radha and Krishna; the narrative employs images that seem erotic but have symbolic overtones meant to convey a spiritual meaning. There are, besides, innumerable poems composed in our regional languages which too sing praises in Krishna's glory. Many of them celebrate the love that Radha and the *gopīs* cherished for Krishna: a charming lad who became their darling and played pranks on them, who thrilled and stole their hearts with sweet notes from his flute.

History bears out that the valley of Kashmir never, in any significant way, came under the *direct* influence of the Bhakti movement nor has the Vaishnavite philosophy influenced the Kashmiri Hindus in any remarkable way. In spite of this, several Bhakti poets hailing from the valley—among whom Parmanand stands pre-eminent—have composed *līlās* and *bhajans* in Kashmiri, devoted to the praise of Krishna.

As I have maintained earlier, most Hindus adore Krishna as God-incarnate, as the Master of Yoga (*Yogēśvara*) and as an ideal Person, considering him as the embodiment of the highest human virtues. Though some Hindu thinkers may see him as the best specimen of humanity rather than God, none of them, ordinarily, entertains any doubt about his historical identity. However, we have also to reckon with a different view of his personality, propagated mostly by the Western scholars and a few others from the Hindu elite, who consider Krishna a legendary figure. There are also those who characterize the whole story of the *Mahābhārata* as a piece of fiction. Some see in it several strands of symbolism as we meet with in literary epics else-

where, that can be variously interpreted. Thus Mahatma Gandhi, who highly valued the *Gītā* as a scripture, sees the *Mahābhārata* essentially as an allegory signifying the righteous war that goes on within ourselves between higher and lower impulses.

Even if we set aside the belief that Krishna was God-incarnate and do not pay attention to the miracles he is said to have performed, we have to concede that he is adorable as an outstanding human being: as a *jagadguru* who spoke words of wisdom to Arjuna as his charioteer on the battlefield, who was extraordinarily charming, with a winsome personality and a sportive nature; who showed through his *līlā* the utmost relevance of love in our social dealings and in matters spiritual. He not only illumined the threefold path of action, knowledge and love through his teachings in the *Gītā* but institutionalized this path through his own practice. For most Hindus, he is the supreme God of Love.

Some detractors of Krishna, as he is depicted in our literature, take exception to his *prema-līlā*. They fail to perceive that he was *puruṣottama*, a superman who educated and elevated, spiritually, his playmates: the cowherd boys of Vraja, and the *gopīs*, who were drawn to him by deep love. There was nothing worldly about this love: at once human and divine, it was pure devotion of the highest intensity. Conveyed as it is through the vocabulary of sensuous love in the *Bhāgavatam* and the latter literary works including the *Gīta Govinda* and the *Sūrsāgar*, it could be mistaken for earthly love by ordinary people. The true import of the story of Krishna and the *gopīs* is to be understood in terms of the symbolism underlying the *līlā* mentioned in the *Bhāgavatam* and other scriptures. Herein Krishna is depicted as the God of Love, supremely beautiful; Radha and the *gopīs* are shown as helplessly drawn to him as they hear the notes of his flute. For the Vaish-

nava devotees, who best understand the nature of the relationship between Krishna and his female adherents, there is nothing profane about it. To them the meaning of the inbuilt symbolism of the Krishna-romance is not lost. They look upon humanity 'as the Bride of God' and on Krishna 'as the only supreme Male in the Universe.'² This ties up with the Christian concept of the human soul as the bride of Christ—a concept matched (and also contrasted) by the Sufi view of the soul as the Active Lover (*āshiq*) and the Divinity as the great Sweetheart.

It is now appropriate to come to Mira and her love of Krishna. Here we are on familiar ground, though there may be some variation in the accounts given of how she met her end (including the belief that she physically disappeared and got absorbed into the image of Krishna). One may not accept the view that she actually consumed the poison mixed with the drink sent to her by her brother-in-law. No one can, however, dispute the fact that all her life she was wedded to Krishna, whose image remained deeply impressed on her mind from her early childhood. In fact she never virtually lost hold of the physical image of Krishna until she breathed her last, practising Bhakti to the letter as prescribed in the *Bhāgavatam*.

It is Mira's *bhajans* or devotional lyrics, which convey her intense love for Krishna, that have immortalized her story as his 'bride' and lent credibility to Radha's love for the historic Krishna. Mira's songs are inimitable as sober and sincere expressions of deep love that is thoroughly spiritual in character. The songs are a class by themselves and will remain our prized possession. The vocabulary of human love used in them is simple and familiar, drawn from human situations that we come across in our day-to-day life, mostly

connected with the affairs of the heart. And yet they strongly appeal to us, especially to those who are themselves devout and have got a good ear for music. Most songs pierce the heart and convince us of Mira's supreme devotion to Krishna. They unmistakably convey to us that she *knows* her lord, for sure, to be the indwelling Master and the only object of her worship—not the mere image she is fondly attached to.

To illustrate what I have said, let us turn to the song, '*Māi main to liyo hai sāvriyā mol*' (translation mine):

Mother dear, I have brought my Love
For the price he deserved;
Some cry 'too heavy', some 'too light',
But I weighed to the last grain, paying in full;
Taunting me, some say I paid more,
some less,
Surely, however, I purchased the
Priceless One;
Some call him 'thin-built',
some 'stout of frame',
I know I got what I bargained for:
Proclaiming it by beat of drum;
Some, jeering, call him 'dark' and
some 'fair',
I made no mistake in seeing
(my eyes opened to the full)
What he's worth;
True to my past life's resolve,
I'm wedded to Giridhara Nāgara.

Mira knows that her detractors are not aware of the greatness of Krishna and of the intensity of her devotion to him. The metaphors used to convey the divinity of Krishna and the depth of her love for him are carefully chosen by the poet in Mira as appropriate communicative tools. 'Purchasing' the Beloved suggests what sacrifice higher love demands and 'weighing' a thing accurately in the balance tells us in clear terms that Mira knows precisely that she has staked her all for the 'Priceless' Divine. Referring to the detractors' jibes

2. Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, *Jayadeva* (Calcutta: Sahitya Akademi, 1981), p. 52.

painting Krishna as 'dark' or 'fair', she wants to convey that her perception of the Divine is clear, which means that she has recognized the Master she seeks. The words 'cheap' (*sogo*) and 'costly' (*mahango*) suggestively paint the pursuit of Love as something comparable to a business transaction—in which a customer should have all his wits about him: this conveys that Mira knows what the stakes involved in the 'transaction' of love are, that no 'price' is too big for union with God, the Precious One. Well set on the spiritual path, she is aware of her goal, knows fully well what true sadhana involves and seeks nothing short of union with the Lord.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize that Sri Krishna's *prema-līlā*, as described in the *Bhagavatam*, and in various versions of it in the works of Jayadeva, Surdas and other Indian poets, point to the fact that the Way of Love, as an approach to the Divine, is in tune with man's psychological make-up inasmuch as he is a loving creature, who hungers for his spiritual fulfilment in love—the noblest of all human emotions. This Way (of Love) at once complements the Way of Knowledge and has a decided superiority over it. Mira's love-lyrics devoted to Krishna—a class by themselves—testify to this fact. □

Festival in Rangoon

In March 1905 Ramakrishnananda went to celebrate the Ramakrishna festival in Burma, at the invitation of the Ramakrishna Sevak Samiti, Rangoon. Every day he performed worship, lectured, and talked about the Master. On the festival day the swami walked four miles to pick *nageswar champā* flowers, which were the Master's favourite. Sharat Chandra Chattopadhyay, the celebrated Bengali novelist (then an unknown young man) accompanied Ramakrishnananda on this walk. Sharat had read Darwin, Tyndall, Mill, and other Western thinkers and considered himself an atheist. On the way, Sharat asked: 'Why do you worship so much?'

Swami Ramakrishnananda: 'Because I derive immense joy from it.'

Sharat: 'Is ritual then the highest form of worship?'

Swami: 'To see God everywhere is the highest worship; the second best is meditation; the third, prayer and japam; and the last, external worship.'

Sharat: 'Then why do people perform such pompous worship?'

Swami: 'Worship is not at all an external affair; it comes from the heart. Ordinary people perform worship either to escape from the displeasure of God or in expectation of fulfilling some desires. All these are low motives. Real worship is not done till devotion overflows the heart and tears roll down from the eyes for a glimpse of God.'

—from *God Lived With Them*

साधनगीता Gita for Spiritual Practice

साधनप्रकाशिकासहिता
With an Exegesis on Spiritual Practice
(Continued from the December 1998 issue)

DR. B.R. PHANI KUMAR

अथ ज्ञानयोगः-३
Yoga of Knowledge-3

एतद्विवेकयुक्तः—

Endowed with this discrimination (between Knowledge and ignorance)—

(७०) समं सर्वेषु भूतेषु तिष्ठन्तं परमेश्वरम्।

विनश्यत्स्वविनश्यन्तं यः पश्यति स पश्यति॥ (१३.२७)

(70) One who sees the same imperishable supreme Lord abiding in all perishable beings, sees indeed.

सर्वेषु भूतेषु स्थावरजङ्गमादिषु समं एकरूपेण तिष्ठन्तं प्रत्यगात्मतया हृदये आसीनं परमेश्वरं विनश्यत्सु नाशं गच्छत्सु अविनश्यन्तं नाशरहितं यो ज्ञानी पश्यति स एव पश्यति नान्यः बहिर्मुखः।

The Knower, who sees in all moving and stationary beings which are perishable, the same supreme Lord of uniform nature, abiding in the heart as the Self within, who is imperishable, alone sees and not the one whose mind is externalized. (13.27)

तस्य परतत्त्वदर्शनशीलस्य फलमाह—

The Lord states the result obtained by such a seer of supreme Reality—

(७१) समं पश्यन् हि सर्वत्र समवस्थितमीश्वरम्।

न हिनस्त्यात्मनात्मानं ततो याति परां गतिम्॥ (१३.२८)

(71) Seeing the same Lord abiding equally everywhere, one kills not the Self by the Self, and therefore attains the Supreme Goal.

सर्वत्र समवस्थितं समभावेन तिष्ठन्तं ईश्वरं समं पश्यन् हि न हिनस्ति हिंसां न करोति आत्मना आत्मानं ततः तत्कारणात् याति गच्छति परां अनुत्तमां गतिं मोक्षम्।

Seeing everywhere the same Lord abiding equally, uniformly, he kills not, does not do any injury to the Self by the Self and therefore, for that reason, attains supreme unsurpassed state which is Liberation. (13.28)

इदानीं आत्मनः कर्माभावं दर्शयति—

The Lord now shows the absence of work for the Self—

(७२) अनादित्वात्त्रिगुणत्वात्परमात्मायमव्ययः।

शरीरस्थोऽपि कौन्तेय न करोति न लिप्यते॥ (१३.३१)

(72) This immutable supreme Self, though residing in the body, neither works nor is touched by the results of work, because It is without beginning and devoid of attributes.

अनादित्वात् निरवयवो ह्यात्मा आदिरहितः स्वकारणरहितः। तद्धेतोः निर्गुणः तस्मात् निर्गुणत्वात् अव्ययोऽयं परमात्मा। यद्धि सगुणं तत् सादि सकारणं त्रिगुणपरिच्छेद्यं च अतः व्येति नैवात्मा। अतः अव्ययः। शरीरस्थोऽपि सर्वशरीरेषु स्थितोऽपि जीवभावमापन्नोऽपि परमार्थतः किञ्चिदपि न करोति। अतः कर्मफलैः न लिप्यते।

The Self which is without parts is without beginning, that is, without any cause of Its

existence. Therefore, this supreme Self is attributeless and for that reason, It is immutable. Verily, a thing with attributes is with a beginning and a cause and it is limited by the three attributes. Therefore, it undergoes mutation; but the Self does not. Hence, It is immutable. Though residing in all the bodies, that is, though It has attained the state of an individual soul, from the absolute sense, It does not do any work, and therefore, It is not touched by the fruits of work. (13.31)

आत्मनः कर्माभावं पश्यतः फलमाह—

The Lord states the result of one who has seen the worklessness of the Self—

(७३) नान्यं गुणेभ्यः कर्तारं यदा द्रष्टानुपश्यति।

गुणेभ्यश्च परं वेत्ति मद्भावं सोऽधिगच्छति॥ (१४.१९)

(73) When the seer perceives no agent other than the attributes and knows That which is beyond the attributes, he attains My nature.

यदा द्रष्टा ज्ञानी गुणेभ्यः सत्त्वरजस्तमोभ्यः अन्यं कर्तारं नानुपश्यति गुणा एव सर्वकर्माणां कर्तारः नात्मा गुणातीतत्वात् इति जानाति अपि च गुणेभ्यश्च त्रिभ्यश्च परं आत्मानं वेत्ति स ज्ञानी मद्भावं मदात्मतां अधिगच्छति प्राप्नोति।

When the seer, the knower, does not perceive any agent other than the attributes, sattva, rajas and tamas, and knows that the attributes alone are the agents of all actions and not the Self which transcends the attributes, and also knows the Self which is beyond the three attributes, that knower attains My nature, oneness with Me. (14.19)

इदानीं तादृशस्य गुणातीतस्य ज्ञानिनो लक्षणानि दर्शयति—

Now, the Lord highlights the qualities of such a knower who has gone beyond the attributes—

(७४) प्रकाशं च प्रवृत्तिं च मोहमेव च पाण्डव।

न द्वेष्टि संप्रवृत्तानि न निवृत्तानि काङ्क्षति॥ (१४.२२)

(74) O Arjuna! the sage neither hates light, activity and delusion when they appear, nor desires them when they disappear.

प्रकाशं इन्द्रियमनोबुद्धीनां प्रकाशं सत्त्वगुणकार्यं च प्रवृत्तिं कर्मसु प्रवृत्तिं रजोगुणकार्यं च मोहं सर्वज्ञाननिरोधकं तमोगुणकार्यं संप्रवृत्तानि संजातानि न द्वेष्टि। एते सत्त्वरजस्तमोगुणाः मां एवं बध्नन्तीति न निन्दति। निवृत्तानि तानि पुनः न काङ्क्षति। गुणातीतत्वात् ज्ञानी तासां विविधानां अवस्थानां द्रष्टा भूत्वा तिष्ठतीत्यर्थः।

Light means the light of the senses, the mind and the intellect. This is the result of sattva. Activity is the tendency to be active, which is the result of rajas. Delusion, which obstructs all Knowledge, is the result of tamas. When they arise, the sage does not hate them, thinking, 'These attributes of sattva, rajas and tamas bind me thus.' Nor does he desire them again when they disappear. The meaning is, the sage, being beyond the attributes, abides as a Witness of those different states. (14.22)

(७५) उदासीनवदासीनो गुणैर्यो न विचाल्यते।

गुणा वर्तन्ते इत्येव योऽवतिष्ठति नेङ्गते॥ (१४.२३)

(75) He who, thinking that the attributes alone act, is not moved by them and abides as if indifferent, is not agitated.

एवं उदासीनवत् औदासीन्यमभ्यसन् आसीनः गुणैः तैः तैः यो ज्ञानी न विचाल्यते स्वरूपात् गुणा एव वर्तन्ते विविधावस्थासु नाहं इत्येव योऽवतिष्ठति स नेङ्गते न चलति।

That sage who sits as if indifferent, practising indifference, is not moved from the real nature by the different attributes. He who understands, 'Attributes alone act in different states

and not I, is not agitated. (14.23)

(७६) समदुःखसुखः स्वस्थः समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः।

तुल्यप्रियाप्रियो धीरस्तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुतिः॥ (१४.२४)

(76) *He is the same in pain and pleasure, self-abiding, equal to a clod, a stone and gold, uniform in the pleasant and the unpleasant, of steady wisdom and identical in blame and praise.*

समदुःखसुखः समे दुःखसुखे यस्य गुणातीतस्य स समदुःखसुखः। स्वस्थः स्वस्मिन्नेव आत्मनि स्थितः। समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः यस्य ज्ञानिनः अविक्रियत्वात् समानि लोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनानि स समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः तुल्यप्रियाप्रियः तुल्ये प्रियमप्रियं च यस्य द्वन्द्वातीतस्य स तुल्यप्रियाप्रियः। धीरः धीमान्। तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुतिः तुल्ये निन्दा चात्मसंस्तुतिश्च यस्य स तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुतिः।

Because the sage is beyond the attributes, to him both pain and pleasure are equal. He is established in his own Self. As he is immutable, a clod, a stone and gold are equal to him. For the reason that he has transcended duality, the pleasant and the unpleasant mean the same to him. He is of steady wisdom and is identical in blame and praise. (14.24)

(७७) मानपमानयोस्तुल्यस्तुल्यो मित्रारिपक्षयोः।

सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी गुणातीतः स उच्यते॥ (१४.२५)

(77) *Such a one is the same in honour and dishonour, is the same towards friend and foe, has renounced all actions, is said to have transcended the attributes.*

मानापमानयोः पूजापरिभवयोः तुल्यः निर्विकारः। तुल्यः समः मित्रारिपक्षयोः मित्रपक्षमरिपक्षं च न भजत इति। सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी सर्वारम्भाः सर्वकर्माणि तान् सर्वारम्भान् परित्यक्तुं शीलमस्येति सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी। स एवंगुणः गुणातीत उच्यते।

He who is the same, does not undergo any modification in honour and dishonour, that is, in worship and derision, does not take either to the side of a friend or to the side of a foe, that is, is equal to both of them, and renounces all actions, all endeavours—he who is possessed with these qualities, is said to have transcended the attributes. (14.25)

(७८) निर्मानमोहा जितसङ्गदोषा अध्यात्मनित्या विनिवृत्तकामाः।

द्वन्द्वैर्विमुक्ताः सुखदुःखसंज्ञैर्गच्छन्त्यमूढाः पदमव्ययं तत्॥ (१५.५)

(78) *The wise who are devoid of ego and delusion, have conquered the evil of attachment, are devoted to spiritual knowledge, are desireless and free from dualities called pleasure and pain, attain that immutable goal.*

निर्मानमोहाः मानमोहवर्जिताः। जितसङ्गदोषाः जितः सङ्गदोषः लोके येन केनचिदपि सङ्ग एव दोषः स जितः यैः ते जितसङ्गदोषाः। अध्यात्मनित्याः प्रत्यगात्मपराः। विनिवृत्तकामाः विशेषेण निवृत्ताः कामाः येभ्यः ते विनिवृत्तकामाः। द्वन्द्वैः सुखदुःखसंज्ञैः सुखदुःखनामकैः विमुक्ताः अमूढाः ज्ञानिनः तत् अव्ययं मोक्षरूपं पदं स्थानं गच्छन्ति प्राप्नुवन्ति।

Those who are devoid of ego and delusion, have overcome the evil of attachment as attachment with anybody in this world is an evil, are devoted to spiritual knowledge, intent on the Self within, whose desires are especially subdued, who are liberated from the dualities called pleasure and pain, and who are wise, the knowers of the Self, attain that immutable goal called Liberation. (15.5)

असक्तबुद्धिमतः परमं फलमाह—

Now the Lord states the supreme result obtained by one whose mind is detached—

(७९) असक्तबुद्धिः सर्वत्र जितात्मा विगतस्पृहः।

नैष्कर्म्यसिद्धिं परमां संन्यासेनाधिगच्छति॥ (१६.४९)

(79) *The man whose mind is detached everywhere, is controlled and who is devoid of desires, attains through renunciation the supreme state of worklessness.*

असक्तबुद्धिः असक्ता असक्ता बुद्धिः यस्य स असक्तबुद्धिः सर्वत्र देहादौ। जितात्मा जितान्तःकरणः। विगतस्पृहः विगता स्पृहा सुखादिषु यस्मात् स विगतस्पृहः। एवंभूतः परमां उत्कृष्टां नैष्कर्म्यसिद्धिं नैष्कर्म्यं सर्वकर्माभावः तदेव सिद्धिः नैष्कर्म्यसिद्धिः तां संन्यासेन अधिगच्छति प्राप्नोति।

He whose mind is not attached anywhere in body etc, is controlled, is devoid of desire for pleasure etc, that is, from whom the desire for pleasures has disappeared, attains through renunciation the supreme state, the highest state of worklessness, the absence of all duties, which itself is Perfection. (18.49)

अध्यात्मसाधनस्य परमां काष्ठां प्रदर्शयितुं तादृशः ब्रह्मज्ञानी कथं वर्तते किं वा लभते इत्युच्यते—

With a view to showing the supreme end of spiritual practice, it is being stated as to how such a knower of Brahman behaves and what he attains—

(८०) ब्रह्मभूतः प्रसन्नात्मा न शोचति न काङ्क्षति।

समः सर्वेषु भूतेषु मद्भक्तिं लभते पराम्॥ (१८.५४)

(80) *He who has become Brahman and is of a tranquil mind neither grieves nor desires. Identical towards all beings, he attains supreme devotion to Me.*

ब्रह्मभूतः स्वयं ब्रह्मैव सन् अपगतमिथ्याप्रत्ययत्वात् ब्रह्मैव भूतः ब्रह्मभूतः। प्रसन्नात्मा प्रसन्नः आत्मा अन्तःकरणं निरन्तरसमाधिना यस्य स प्रसन्नात्मा। न शोचति न शोकं गच्छति किमप्युद्दिश्य। न काङ्क्षति किमपि सर्वकाङ्क्षाभावात् प्रत्यगात्मनिष्ठया परिपूर्णकामत्वात्। सर्वेषु भूतेषु श्रेष्ठेषु अवरेषु वा समं समत्वेन वर्तते इति। एवंगुणः मद्भक्तिं मयि परमेश्वरे भक्तिं परां उत्कृष्टां लभते। जीवन्नेव मुक्तो भवतीत्यर्थः।

Being already Brahman, he has verily become Brahman because his ignorance—false knowledge—has been destroyed. He, whose mind is tranquil through uninterrupted concentration does not grieve for anything. He does not desire anything because he is desireless, because all his desires are fulfilled by being established in the Self within. He behaves identically, with even-mindedness, with all beings whether they are superior or inferior. Such a one attains supreme, highest devotion to Me, the Supreme Lord. The meaning is that he becomes liberated while living. (18.54)

समाप्तोऽयं ग्रन्थः।

This work attains its completion.

श्रीरामकृष्णार्पणमस्तु।

May this be an offering to Sri Ramakrishna!

A Visit to Sri Ramakrishna

With tears in his eyes, Dr. Abdul Wajij reminisced his meeting with Sri Ramakrishna before a group of devotees at the Yogodyana in 1898. Dr. Wajij met Sri Ramakrishna with his friend Abbas Ali, when Ram Chandra Datta took them to him in 1885. Sri Ramakrishna took them all to his room, made them sit on a carpet and sat down on another. This set Wajij thinking, 'We heard that he is a holy man. Then why has he kept us at a distance? Has he given us a separate carpet because we are Muslims and he is a Hindu brahmin?' This doubt did not last long, however. While talking about God, Sri Ramakrishna became so intoxicated that he came and sat on the same carpet and continued the conversation. Before entering his room Dr. Wajij had three questions in mind, Even without his asking, Sri Ramakrishna answered them all in course of the conversation. Sri Ramakrishna also fed the party some sweets. Dr. Wajij was immensely happy with this meeting. Sri Ramakrishna also invited him to come again.

—retold from *Ramakrishna As We Saw Him*

Reviews and Notices

**HEALTHY MIND, HEALTHY BODY:
NEW THOUGHTS ON HEALTH: Sri
Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai
600004; 1997; pp. viii+231; Rs. 40.**

Medical science is also not excluded from the prevailing attitude of fragmentation, compartmentalization and specialization. Allopathic medicine focuses on the physical being and views various organs of the body with fragmented outlook without any consideration for mind and Spirit; and the body is considered a machine which can be repaired in case of disorder.

But, there is a growing realization among physicians, patients and the general public that the process of healing takes place on all levels of our being — physical, mental and spiritual. What we need is 'total' health. And this is the theme of the book under review, which provides a new perspective and fresh insights into the holistic approach to health.

Out of nineteen essays published in the book, sixteen appeared in the November-December 1996 special edition of the *Vedanta Kesari*, whereas three new essays are included in this book under review.

The essays may be categorized into four groups:

1) Those providing background and introduction to the concept of holistic health, like, Holistic Health; The Need for Holistic Medicine; Health and Spiritual Life; Well-being and Spirituality; and Trusting Inner Wisdom.

2) Essays on alternative medicine systems such as, Acupuncture; Native American Healing; Yoga and Holistic Health; Tribal Health Care System; Kai-igaku; The Way of Universal Medicine; and Self-healing.

3) Essays giving information on the relationship of disease with body, mind and food.

4) The last article is the editorial of the special issue entitled 'Look at the Ocean', which, after a thorough analysis, beautifully concludes how body and mind are interconnected. The body is a mere wave in the ocean of matter, and the mind just another wave in the ocean of ideas; both are just waves in the ocean of life-consciousness, and to realize our oneness with this infinite ocean of consciousness is, according to Vedanta, to be in a state of perfect health and joy.

The essence of the whole book can be put as under:

- 1) Truthfulness, purity, faith in one's own divine self and fearlessness are the four important values contributing to good health.
- 2) Balanced emotions are prerequisite for the unhindered flow of pranic energy within the individual or between individual and universal life. And this is absolutely necessary for maintaining perfect health.
- 3) The real cause of psychosomatic disorders is the misuse of our cognitive and conative faculties and the inner disconnectedness.
- 4) Faith, will-power and imagination are the instruments for conquering disease.
- 5) Healing is the use of inner power or resources to balance and harmonize the mind-body by restoring its self-regulation and wholeness. The essence of self-regulation is mindful monitoring and self-directed modification in behaviour. Drugs and food have to work through our 'internal pharmacy' to heal us. We can also modify our 'internal pharmacy' by knowing our mind-body connections.

Thus, the book very assiduously drives home the fact that the physical illness of a human being should be considered as a disorder which must be recognized and treated at all levels.

Indeed an enlightening publication, offering refreshing insights into the cultivation of a healthy mind and a health body.

Dr. Chetana Mandavia, Junagadh

**THE ADVAITA OF ART by Dr.
Harsha V. Dahejia; Motilal Banarsidass,
Jawahar Nagar, New Delhi 110007; 1997;
pp. xix+194; Rs. 195 (pbk), Rs. 295 (cl).**

Art experience is one of the most intensive and intimate ones where the subject-object duality or the trio of the knowledge-process, ie knower, known and knowledge, remains hidden for a while. This is known as the state of *tripuṭi-vilaya*. This state is definitely a state of non-duality which is frequently realized in religious and other realms as well. Here, in this work, the aesthetic experience is said to have been accomplished in a secular form. The author is interested in a purely secular approach to the art object as an aesthete (*rasika*). He, in fact, draws a distinction between an aesthete and a devotee. According to him, an aesthete need

not be a devotee. The Indian artistic tradition has accorded an exalted and independent standing to the aesthete. The concept of sacredness in visual art seems to have started around the first century of the Christian era with the search for, and the development of, the Buddha's image.

The book under review is an undertaking to demonstrate that aesthetic experience is a transcendental one. The author holds that art is a statement of the philosophy of the age that produces it and remains an inspiration for the age that follows. He also maintains that an art object is *saṁskṛita*—that has been perfectly made and which is in conformity with the artistic tradition. He examines the dynamics of two aesthetic processes stemming from emotion (*rasa*) and form (*rūpa*) and underpins them within the absolutistic epistemology of Kashmir Śaivism which treats the realization of the Ultimate as the joy of a positive dimension as against the popular negativism of Śaṅkara's advaitism.

The book has eight chapters including the Introduction. Chapters 2 to 5 explore the dynamics of primary meaning (*sākṣātartha*) and secondary meaning (*parokṣārtha*) of a *rasa* and a *rūpa* experience, with emphasis on the art object, exemplified by poetry (*kāvya*) and craft (*śilpa*). Chapter 6 is a shift from the art object to the subject. Chapter 7 examines the aesthetic implications of two consortships in the Hindu tradition, that of Rādhā and Pārvatī, exclusively from the aesthetic point of view. The last chapter deals with aesthetics and idealism. It makes clear that Kashmir Śaivism provides an almost perfect home for aesthetic experience. *Ardhanārīśvara* is said to be a perfect model of such an experience.

The author of the book investigates, as stated above, the possibility of a secular aesthetic experience which could be elevated to the status of a yoga within an advaitic framework. The inquiry is basically epistemic and centres round the concept of meaning (*artha*). *Artha*, here, is essentially objective. But any deep aesthetic experience can take place only when the *artha* is realized by the subject. Thus *artha* is a bridge between the art object and the aesthete.

For Bhartrhari (cf. his *Vākyapadīyam*), the essential nature of Brahman is word (*śabda*). *Śabda*, for him, realizes itself when it encounters its *artha*, as a woman looking at herself in a mirror. His *spṛṣṭavāda* provided the framework for exaltation of word to *Śabda*-Brahman. The author of the book under reference maintains that the meaning of meaning is Brahman. All *arthas*, all meanings, centre round the Ultimate or Brahman. It is that which is manifest in all statements. This is what has been confirmed by the British idealist F.H. Bradley when he says that the Absolute is the subject of all

predicates. This has also the support of Prabhākara when he states that the meaning of a statement is deductive (*anvitābhīdhāna-vāda*) and the purport of all Vedic sentences is the performance of *yajña* (*āmnāyasya kriyārthatvāt*). Prabhākara advocates the theory of *tripuṭi-saṁvit*, according to which knower, known and knowledge are given simultaneously in an act of cognition.

Two levels of meaning, namely, primary (*sākṣātartha*) and secondary (*parokṣārtha*), have been investigated in the book. While the primary meaning depends largely on *pratyakṣa* as a mode of cognition, inference forms an essential part of the secondary. The primary is an encounter with the *rasa*-Brahman (*raso vai saḥ*) whereas in the secondary we have the graduated realization of the *rūpa*-Brahman. The Vedic texts are basic to the *sākṣātartha* and the myths, in general, form the foundation of the *parokṣārtha* tradition in Indian art. Sound (*dhvani*) provides a good model for the understanding of the latter. The basic dynamics of *dhvani* is a shift of meaning, an *arthāntara*, from a superficial perceived level to a deep inferential meaning. Tagore rightly says, of course on the authority of the *Īśa Upaniṣad* (9, 11) that art is that mastery where the Infinite becomes the finite without losing its infinity (cf. his *Personality*, p. 44).

The art object provides the harmony of the finite (*sākṣātartha*) and the Infinite (*parokṣārtha*). *Rūpa* is the symbol of the Infinite and moves from the formless to form and carries the mind of the aesthete to the formless again. *Rūpa*, however, depicts beauty in its purely physical form and possesses a *sākṣātartha*. It is a visual language. A proper understanding and realization of the *sākṣātartha* of the *rūpa* leads the aesthete from the *rūpa* to the manifestation (*prati-rūpa*). *Rūpa* hints insistently at the metaphysical, hidden basis of beauty, beauty that will be cognized as *parokṣārtha*. Herein lies its significance for an advaita of art. We may say that if *rasa* provided the corner-stone of Indian art and art theories, *rūpa* is the very idiom of Indian plastic art. The encounter (*sākṣātartha*) with the art object is at the level of essence (*rasa*), but the instrumentality of this is the significant form (*rūpa*). *Rūpa*-Brahman (*viśva-rūpa*) is the ground of aesthetic experience. And the Omega point in any aesthetic experience is the consciousness resting in itself (*viśrānti*) in the cognizing subject. Thus the higher and ultimate understanding of artistic form is none other than metaphysics. This has been stated by the *Vāstu-sūtra Upaniṣad* when it says: *Yathā brahma-vidyā tathā rūpa-prajñā*.

The Epilogue of the book rightly states that Kashmir Śaivism provides the legitimacy to aesthetic experience, and within its advaitic framework art experience can be understood as a form of yoga. Ontologically, Kashmir Śaivism affords a

reality to art objects and art experiences alike. Epistemologically, Kashmir Śaivism points to the twin concepts of enjoyment (*bhoga*) and *viśrānti* as essential for a Yoga of Art.

Dahejia investigates into the total dynamics of the art process in the book on the authority of primary and secondary sources. He manifests rare introspection and insight into the nature of art from the viewpoint of an aesthete. The work is outstanding and an admirable contribution to the philosophy of art.

Professor (Dr.) S.P. Dubey, Jabalpur

RITUAL AND MANTRAS: RULES WITHOUT MEANING by Dr. Frits Staal; Motilal Banarsidass, Jawahar Nagar, New Delhi 110007; 1996; pp. xix+490; Rs. 195 (pbk), Rs. 295 (cl).

The work is the first Indian edition of the title *Rules Without Meaning: Ritual, Mantras and the Human Sciences*, published by Peter Lang Publishers Inc, New York, in 1993. It is an in-depth study of rituals and mantras and shows that they have been in practice much before the phenomenon of languages developed in human life. Rites have a world of their own and lead a life free from major socio-religious constraints. The author analyses Vedic rituals by using modern methods and tries to show that in human science the prevalent dogma of two cultures of East and West or of Science and Humanities is eradicable.

The book is based on the results of the performance of the *Agnicayana* ('Piling of Fire') in 1975 in southern India. Two volumes were published in 1983 under the title, *Agni — The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*. In addition, it derives materials from several other publications by the author from 1972 onward and some of the ongoing researches.

The book comprises four parts and thirty chapters. Part I discusses methods, meanings and rules in general. The author holds that in the analysis of rituals and mantras two concepts, namely, meaning and rules, play an important role. It has been pointed out that (a) the positivists' characterization of the scientific method is a caricature, (b) the home of meaning is language, (c) meaning, although linked with expression of language, need not be a property of all members of that class, for some expressions of language are meaningless, and (d) the notion of 'rule' is basic to the understanding of many human activities.

Meaning, as we know, is primarily discussed in philosophy, and rules in linguistics. In Indian philosophy, the former has been discussed at length. While the Grammarians discuss the term

(*pada*), the Naiyāyikas analyse the meaning of the term (*padārtha*), and the Mīmāṃsakas examine the meaning of a sentence (*vākyārtha*). Bhartṛhari, in his *Vākyapadīya* (I.123), states that there is no concept whatsoever which is not expressed through words. The Naiyāyikas speak of four conditions for terms to express proper meaning, namely, (a) expectancy (*ākāṅkṣā*), (b) competency (*yogyatā*), (c) proximity (*sannidhi*), and (d) intention (*tātparya*). The Mīmāṃsā school is concerned primarily with the meaning of Vedic texts and clearly says that those Vedic statements that are not concerned with the activity of *yajña* are meaningless (*āmnāyasya kriyārthatvāt ānarthakyam atadarthānām*). Further, no activity is performed without a purpose (*prayojanam anuddiśya na mando'pi pravartate*). Hence, all Vedic rituals have certain ends in view, be that heaven or a male child or anything else. Jaimini and Śābara hold that the meaning of a sentence depends on the meaning of the terms, like a picture providing a whole view on the basis of its parts. This is also more or less the view of Kumārila who maintains that the meaning of a sentence is synthetic (*abhihitānvaya*). Prabhākara, however, emphasizes on the unity of meaning (*anvitābhidhāna: anvitānām padārthānām abhidhānam*). This is true of all imperative sentences.

In Part II of the book under review, Vedic rituals, their structure, and meaning have been discussed. *Agnicayana* (with its performance for twelve days) has been detailed in particular. It has been emphasized that ritual is a pure activity, without meaning or goal (cf. Prabhākara and Kant). Ritual acquires meaning when associated with religion.

Part III of the work is concerned with mantras (sacred formulas or instruments to think, for which we have no English equivalent). Vedic rituals consist of rites and mantras. Mantras are recited and chanted. They hardly refer to the acts they accompany. They also release us when contemplated (*mananāt trāyate*).

Part IV of the publication deals with human science. It may be noted that except in English the term 'science' does not exclude the humanities. In English, it is chiefly applied to the 'exact' sciences (eg, mathematics and natural sciences). The part of the book under reference ventures an application of the scientific method to the study of human beings; hence the usage of the expression 'human science'.

India developed the science of linguistics and of rituals. These areas are obviously human sciences. Positive sciences also, it has been pointed out, did not first develop in the West. They rather developed first in Babylonia and China. And Chinese rulers were happy to import mantras from India while exporting many commodities to the

rest of the world.

Four characteristics of science have been enumerated by the author under reference, namely, (a) empirical adequacy, (b) abstraction, (c) consistency, and (d) methodology. And he notes that Indian works on rituals and linguistics may be regarded as specimens of science, as they fulfil all these conditions.

In Indian philosophy, the term for science is *vijñāna*. In the classical world it stood for spiritual knowledge. The scientist (*vijñātā*) was the seer or the knower. Such a person was never satisfied with the finite since that was perishable. For lasting joy one has to transcend the finite and reach the Infinite (*bhūmā*, cf. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 7.23.1).

Even in the West, it is stated, the need to transcend the exactness of science was felt. Whitehead had remarked that there is a motive of unrest which urges scientists beyond satisfaction with simple description. F.H. Bradley noted: 'The most interesting results in science are hypotheses about the existence of entities that are not directly observed but are assumed to be real.' We feel the need of a deeper meaning and explanation.

The problem of meaning is perhaps the central problem of contemporary philosophy. Even the Greeks emphasized on the clarity of thought and language. The Buddha declared several questions as 'not fitting', and hence to be set aside (*thapaniṇya*). The *R̥g Veda* (10.71.4) clearly says that words reveal their meaning to those who establish intimacy with them, as the bride unveils her face only to the beloved one.

Most contemporary philosophers accept that meaning is not a kind of commodity that can be assigned to everything; it is primarily a property of linguistic expression. Wittgenstein, in his first book, *Tractatus*, held that elementary expressions describe atomic facts. Composite expressions, on the other hand, are tautologies. Logic consists of such expressions, hence is without reference and is meaningless. In his second book (*Philosophical Investigations*), he declared that the meaning of a word often lies in its use. Einstein felt the need of a 'new grammar' to abandon ordinary language and introduce new languages (artificial languages, eg mathematics) for his General Theory of Relativity.

Hans-Geord Gadamer, while introducing philosophical hermeneutics, maintains that language is speculative. An expression of language does not mean what it says, but points to an infinity of things unsaid. He, however, restricts this poly-interpretability to the star-sentences, in propositions where the meaning horizon of what is actually to be said is concealed. (Cf. Plotinus in his *Enneads* when he says that 'the stars must be like letters that are constantly being written in the

sky... while performing another activity, they also, through that same activity, convey meaning'). This, according to the author of the book under review, is the most monumental error of the positivist-empiricist tradition.

Linguistics, as mentioned earlier, originated in India. The *Prātiśākhya*s aimed at a complete description of the Vedic texts with the help of rules of derivation of the *samhitā-pāṭha* from the *pada-pāṭha* of each Vedic school. Pāṇini, in his *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, shifted from the fixed corpus of Vedic recitation to the living domain of spoken Sanskrit. He invented the notion of rule (*regula*) that made all discussions possible and accounted for other new insights as well. The meaning rules imply that they are about meaning. But it does not mean that they themselves have meaning. They are like cups for drinking and not the item to be consumed.

Noam Chomsky, in the contemporary West, has tried to evolve rules for the English language. He has stated that the notion of a rule as a hypothetical entity is clearly related to the rationalist (Cartesian) conception of human language. Language, in the concrete sense, is the sum of words and phrases by which any man expresses his thought. Pāṇini's grammar and the generative grammars written later (cf. Chomsky and Halle's *Sound Structure of English*, 1968) are so similar in spirit, method, organization and results that one can easily conclude that linguistics, and therefore science, is not a Western invention but a universal discovery of humanity.

The author of the book under review rightly holds that the meaninglessness of rituals is a tip of the iceberg. What remains under water contains the roots of religion. Through the visible tips we may infer, nay, investigate, the deeper foundations of our culture which has developed from the unmanifest. Language is definitely the most characteristic feature of mankind. But behind linguistic expressions there is a world of the unmanifest. The *vaikhari* form of language springs from the *nāda-Brahman* (cf. *Vākyapadīya*, I. 143).

This study of Staal is a tour from rituals via mantras to language. It culminates in finding that rituals and mantras deal with features that are universal. And this universal is obviously beyond specific linguistic expressions. The author of the book finds usage of mantras, of course in a crude form, in Africa as well. He also compares the Vedic tradition with the Taoist ritual tradition. He concludes that rituals and mantras are not language. They originated prior to language. Hence we do not, and cannot, easily ascribe meaning to them. In this particular sense, they are without meaning, 'meaning-less'.

Dr. S.P. Dubey Jabalpur

**SUREŚVARA'S VĀRTIKA ON
AJĀTAŚATRU BRĀHMAṆA** by K.P. Jog
and Shoun Hino; Motilal Banarsidass,
Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110007; 1997;
pp. 270; Rs. 295.

The work under review is a translation of Sureśvara's *vārtika* on the *Ajātaśatru Brāhmaṇa* of *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. It is a work mainly meant to elucidate, explain and clarify many points from Ācārya Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. Sureśvara was a direct disciple of Śaṅkara and learnt his Advaita philosophy at the feet of his master. This *vārtika* is considered to be one of the very important works by Sureśvara and was not translated in full, with explanatory notes. It is a remarkable work which in short covers the entire field of the Advaita of Śaṅkarācārya.

Like most of the *upaniṣads*, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* also is a dialogue between various thinkers. The *Kaṭha* is a dialogue between Yama and Naciketas. The *Praśna* is a dialogue between the teacher and his six disciples. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* each *brāhmaṇa* is a dialogue. The *Ajātaśatru Brāhmaṇa* is a dialogue between Bālāki Gārgya and the king Kāśya Ajātaśatru. Gārgya, a brahmin, was a proud scholar and well-versed in Vedānta lore. But he was not a knower of Brahman (*brahmajñāni*). Yet, like Śvetaketu, he was proud of his learning, and vainly believed that he was qualified to teach the Knowledge of Brahman (*brahmavidyā*) to others. Perhaps he neither knew nor cared to know that a *brahmajñāni* did not volunteer to impart *brahmavidyā* to those who did not seek it from him, and, unless approached duly, even to those who sought such a *vidyā*. He did not know perhaps that the Self is known in silence. As the Buddhist would put it, *paramārtho hi āryāṇāṃ tūṣṇībhāvaḥ*. He was proving the truth in the Upaniṣadic statement, *yasyāmatam tasya matam matam yasya na veda saḥ*. He was unfortunately an ignorant person who needed to be instructed.

Kāśya Ajātaśatru was a king and a realized soul, a *kṣatriya* who pricked the bubble of Gārgya's vanity. Admitting that as a *kṣatriya* he was not qualified to teach a brahmin (a subtle irony?), he accepted that when approached by a seeker, a realized soul should not reject the knowledge to the disciple. Hence he accepted Gārgya as his disciple. During the course of this discourse, various problems were taken up for consideration, analysis, examination and evaluation. Then the *siddhānta* was stated.

Ajātaśatru then takes Gārgya to a man who is fast asleep and calls aloud the name of the sleeper to awaken him from deep sleep. The sleeper fails

to respond. Then he shakes the sleeper violently. To this the sleeper responds and wakes up. This example is meant for explaining the nature of the Self or Atman in deep sleep, dream and waking states. He points out why the body, the sense organs and *prāṇa* are not the Self. He considers the Cārvāka, Naiyāyika, Sāṅkhya and Theist views, and rejects them. The individuality of each soul continues through the states of sleep and waking. As the *Brahma Sūtras* put it, *Sa eva tu karmānusmṛti śabdavidhibhīḥ* (3.2.9). *Susūpti-utkrāntayorī bhedenā*. He also explains the nature of the dream state and the waking state. These analyses lead him to conclude about the phenomenality and unreality of the world of waking experience.

Sureśvara was not only a great Advaitin, but was also well-versed in all the schools of thought of his time, including Bauddha, Cārvāka, Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā and Sāṅkhya. He proceeds to consider and examine the views of Bhartṛprapañca and rejects them.

In the history of Indian philosophical thought such analyses of states of experiences occur in the literature of both heterodox and orthodox schools. This occurs in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, *Chāndogya*, *Praśna* and *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣads* and the *Āgama Śāstra* of Gauḍapāda. In the heterodox schools, it was Vasubandhu who analysed the states of experience for the first time. He gave the example of an adolescent dreamer's dream experience and concluded that, because of similarity with dream experience, the waking experience and the world are unreal. Thus, he identified waking experience with dream and declared both to be illusory and unreal. One cannot therefore avoid seeing some parallel to this in Advaita. The elephant (*gaja*) is *mithyā* and running away (*palāyanam*) is also *mithyā*. But the fear arising out of it (*tajjanya bhūtiḥ*) is a fact. Thus the Advaitins also conclude *svapna samatvāt na sat jāgaritamapi jāgradbhāvaḥ svapnabhāvaḥ asadeva*.

Sureśvara touches upon such topics like *ajāti* and *anutpanna*, and explains the three levels of existences. One is again reminded of the kindred theories of *ajāti*, *anutpanna*, *niḥsvabhāva*, *svabhāva-traya* of the Vijñānavādins like Vasubandhu and Asaṅga, and also the *Laṅkāvatāraśūtra*. The three *sattas* of Śaṅkara and Sureśvara ultimately give way to two *sattas* in the philosophy of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, who reduces *vyāvahārika* to *prātibhāsika*. One is reminded of the Buddhist statement, *dve satye sanupāśritya buddhānāṃ dharmadeśanā lokasamvṛti satyam ca satyam ca paramārthataḥ*.

As regards the translation of the work, by and large, it is an excellent work. The translation of verses 224 and 225 (page 87) appeared to me to be involved and complicated. It is one compound sentence extending over one-third of a page, and

the reader might find it difficult to relate the various clauses into a meaningful whole. This is especially true of one who may be a beginner and is reading a Vedantic text for the first time. Sometimes the literal meanings given in the footnotes appear more appropriate than the derivative ones. For example, consider *tadutham*, *puruṣārtha*, etc on page 2. I feel that the Sanskrit quotations in the explanatory notes need to be paraphrased or translated, as the present-day readers, especially philosophy students, are not ordinarily good at that language.

A word about the purpose of the translation of this book. Is it meant for scholars who already know about Advaita and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad-bhāṣya* by Śaṅkara? Or, is it for the use of research scholars and students of Advaita Vedanta? Though this work helps all types of students, the Introduction by the authors to the book should have been more detailed. I was thinking of Thibaut's Introduction to his translation of the *Brahma Sūtra-bhāṣya* by Śaṅkara or *Śrī Bhāṣya*, or Dr. Radhakrishnan's Introduction to his *Brahma Sūtras*; these will serve as good models. The readers, after going through the author's Preface, are then put in the proper frame of mind and become more receptive.

I am sure this work will serve as a good handbook of Advaita philosophy to the adept in that school and as a good guide to Advaita research scholars and students.

I congratulate the authors on a very good job well done.

The book is beautifully brought out by M/s Motilal Banarsidass. As regards the price, good things are always costly.

Dr. S.G. Mudgal, Mumbai

SRI RUDRAM AND PURUSHASUKTAM by Swami Amritananda (tr.); Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai 600004; 1997; pp. viii+187; Rs. 30.

Two outstanding texts of Vedic mantras are the *Sri Rudram* and the *Purushasuktam* — the grand and mellifluous hymns addressed to the universal Being called Rudra and Purusha. Though difficult to understand their true import, *Sri Rudram* always fascinates the devout (the reviewer also one of them!) by the majority of their diction and the sweetness of their sound. Swami Amritanandaji has done a great service to such devotees by giving a lucid explanation of Sayana, Bhatta Bhaskara, Abhinava Sankara, Vishnu Suri, Skanda Swami and Ahobala to make the meaning of these mantras as clear as possible.

Sri Rudraprasna, also known as *Satarudriya* and *Rudradhyaya*, occurs in the fourth *kanda* of the *Yajur-veda*. Actually, it occurs in the *karma kanda* of the *Yajur Veda* and is used during *homas*. But, as said very rightly in the preface of the book, *Sri Rudram* is remarkable not only for its phonetic grandeur but also for its universality of approach to the Divine. Here, Rudra, whose praise is sung, is not a sectarian deity, but the supreme Being, who is all-pervasive and manifests Himself in a myriad forms for the sake of diverse spiritual aspirants.

The text is divided into two portions: (1) 'Namakam', and (2) 'Chamakam'. In the *Namakam*, the word *namah* is used 183 times, and it consists of eleven chapters. The first chapter is a set of prayers offered to the Lord, requesting Him to give up anger. The second to the ninth chapters contain hymns connected with prostration to the various forms of the Lord. The tenth chapter eulogizes the munificence of the Lord and prays for prosperity and the warding off of evil. In the last chapter, the mantras describe thanksgiving to the Lord's attendants, the *ganas*.

The next eleven chapters constitute *Chamakam*, and it has the leading statement, 'May everything in this world be offered to God as worship' (*yajñena kalpantam*), repeated. This is a compendium of prayers for the fulfilment of the desires of human beings. The desires are auspicious and not opposed to dharma.

In the book under review, Swami Amritananda has tried to explain each mantra of the *Namakam* and *Chamakam*. While trying to explain the mantras, the following procedure is adopted:

a) Word-to-word meaning of the mantra followed by literal translation and a brief introduction to the mantra.

b) A discussion is divided into two portions: one based on the *karma* and *upasana* view, and the other based on the Vedantic view.

The *Namakam* is explained with the help of commentaries of Sayana, Bhatta Bhaskara, Abhinava Sankara and Skanda Swami, whereas the *Chamakam* is explained by the commentaries of Sayana and Vishnu Suri. Bhatta Bhaskara, Skanda Swami and Ahobala praise worship-oriented meaning, and the explanations of the mantras that Vishnu Suri gives are a grand exposition of Advaita viewed from various angles.

The *Purushasuktam* is a group of mantras which describe Parabrahman. The Purusha described here is referred to as Virat, the Soul of the universe. Essentially it speaks of the entire universe as an emanation from the Supreme and emphasizes that all this world has come from the Lord.

The text is explained with the help of commentaries of Bhatta Bhaskara and Sayana. The one by

Bhatta Bhaskara gives alternative explanation and is more expressive, whereas the one by Sayana is precise but terse. Both are faithful to the original and, taken together, help us in getting the meaning of the mantras, though apparently they differ in their approach. Here also word-for-word English translation of the Sanskrit words is presented, followed by the commentaries.

The book reveals the deep spiritual significance of the *Sri Rudram* and the *Purushasukta*, and the chanting of these mantras with a full knowledge of their meaning will be a moving and absorbing experience. It is an indispensable book for all those who love to chant, and amply fulfils its purpose. The title page is imaginatively conceived. We are deeply indebted to Swami Amritanandaji for his great service to devotees.

Dr. Chetana Mandavia, Junagadh

THE ULTIMATE MEDICINE by Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, (Ed.) Robert Powell; Motilal Banarsidass, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110007; 1996; pp. 217; Rs. 125 (pbk), Rs. 225 (cl).

Normally, medicine is prescribed by a competent physician for healing diseases which afflict sick persons. But when the ultimate medicine is proposed, obviously the disease must be of a different kind which threatens the very existence of human life. However, the ultimate medicine can only be prescribed by a spiritual personality who himself is said to have realized the nature of the ultimate Reality in his own life. Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj (1897–1981) is such a gigantic spiritual personality of India, a unique character, 'a realized master of Tantric Nath lineage', who was aware of the spiritual predicament of modern times. He invites us to return to our original nature, the absolute non-duality of Being which will cure the disease of an unusual dimension.

The book under review has been developed out of the talks Peter V. Madill and others had with Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj. The dialogues as recorded in the present volume are carefully edited transcripts of tapes made out of the conversations. The editorial responsibility had been borne by Dr. Robert Powell, who has conveniently divided the contents into eleven chapters and titled each chapter according to the central spirit of the discussion, which speaks volumes for the profound heights of spirituality from which these advanced instructions were spelt out for the spiritual advancement of aspirants.

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj led a simple family life and faithfully discharged all the household

obligations like any other social being. But in his inner life he was a different soul, a gigantic spiritual personality, who knew the absolute non-duality of Being. True to age-old Indian tradition, Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj poured forth the highest truth of non-duality in a unique way to his visitors, both Indian and Western, who visited him during his lifetime. Sri Nisargadatta was not an academic scholar and, obviously, it cannot be expected that the present work is a systematic study on Advaita Vedanta authored by an academic scholar by adopting a well-conceived methodology. As a matter of fact, Sri Nisargadatta's style of discussion is abrupt, though very much provocative and immensely profound in implications. 'He shares the highest truth of non-duality in his own unique way, from the depths of his own realization,' to help advanced spiritual aspirants who are really eager and serious about spiritual progress. The advanced instructions as recorded in the dialogues seek to suggest that the unfoldment of what is really enfolded in one's inner life is an essential prerequisite for spiritual progress. Maharaj invites us to practise and realize in our own life the essential oneness of humanity.

It is not easy to present a resume of the book under review owing to its abrupt, repetitive and unmethodical style of presentation, and therefore the book cannot be subjected to analysis and critical appraisal. The editor, in the Preface, has advised the readers 'to accept the material in a holistic manner rather than attempting a microscopic, comparative and analytical evaluation of textual components.' This refrains the reviewer from undertaking a critical analysis of the contents. All that he seeks to suggest is that Maharaj's teachings as recorded in this work might be found to be very fascinating and instructive to one who is not only interested in intellectual comprehension of inner truth but also eager to transform and reshape one's own life and behavioural pattern in the light of the ultimate truth of non-dual Reality. The message that the book brings to us is that a mere 'hearing and acknowledging' of truth is not sufficient for spiritual emancipation of the individual but a radical transformation of both inner and outer life is the sine qua non of any such endeavour.

The paper, printing and binding of the book are all excellent. A glossary of important words might help readers not familiar with the terminology of Indian philosophy and religion. A brief bibliography of books by and on Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj has been appended to the book. Readers interested in specialized spiritual endeavour might find this book dependable and helpful for a deeper comprehension of the essential oneness of humanity.

Prof. Ranjit Kumar Acharjee, North Tripura

**SHAMAN OF TIBET, MILAREPA:
FROM ANGER TO ENLIGHTENMENT**
*by Heather Hughes; Motilal Banarsidass,
Jawahar Nagar, New Delhi 110007; 1996;
pp. 294; Rs. 245.*

The book begins by introducing what 'shaman' actually means and stands for: 'A shaman is an individual who lives according to the natural laws of life, that is, physical life and all planes of existence beyond it ... a shaman's life is orderly but open-ended.... A Shaman lives as soul in a physical body, rather than a physical body/mind with a soul.... All life is spiritual when lived from the viewpoint of soul.' This is the keynote of the entire episode narrated symbolically through the story of Milarepa of Tibet (AD 1040–1143) who overcame all the vile physical feelings and sentiments by leading an orderly life under the guidance of an enlightened guru, Marpa, which living ultimately culminated in his own enlightenment.

In the Prelude to the book under review, Rechung, a faithful disciple of Milarepa and an enlightened soul, narrates how Milarepa conquered his anger, fear, greed, feeling of revenge and love for a woman, etc through gradual steps by leading a disciplined life through sustained effort and diligence. In the course of his journey towards the realization of the Self, its immense potentialities and ultimate destiny, he was constantly guided by his guru, Marpa, a competent and capable lama of Tibet.

In all, there are nineteen chapters in this book divided into two parts: the first part comprises of nine chapters under the heading 'Bondage' and the remaining ten chapters are included in the second part entitled 'Freedom'. In the first, the factors responsible for the bondage of our soul have been narrated pictorially through the story of Milarepa — how he was commissioned by his mother to avenge the insult and injustice done to their family and how he ultimately reached the 'Prayer Room' of Lama Youngton-Trogyal, through great trials and difficulties which enabled him in unleashing the powers and potentialities dormant in him.

These powers should be evolved and developed to the fullest extent so that the higher Self could prevail over the lower self by transforming all lower, physical and animal desires and sentiments to that of love — supreme and divine. But truth that could bring forth such radical transformation of inner and outer life can never be obtained by any easy, cheap and shortcut method. On the contrary, sustained effort and perseverance is very essential to gain it. This is, in a nutshell, the gist of Part Two of the book.

Undoubtedly, this is a wonderful book, enchanting, invigorating and thoroughly absorbing. Tibetan Lamaism, which forms the basis of the book, does not advocate a life-negating philosophy. It preaches that the physical body is the vehicle for the attainment of higher truth. In other words, the truth that we seek is hidden within. It blossoms forth magnificently only when a disciplined life is led by encountering all the phantoms which manifest themselves in the course of the journey towards enlightenment. In fact, this is not an ordinary book like any other of the category, 'but a profound spiritual truth made manifest.' A close study of the contents dispels the clouds of misunderstanding and suspicion, and acts as a beacon light in the darkness of despair especially for one 'who desires spiritual heights but fears that one can never really make it.' Illustrations by Henry Calero at the beginning of each chapter are very much significant and eloquent which enhance the beauty and value of the book. The reviewer feels that the present work will certainly help sincere seekers of spirituality to transform consciousness and to achieve new heights of spirituality hitherto not dreamt of. M/s Motilal Banarsidass deserve all praise for such an excellent publication.

Prof. Ranjit Kumar Acharjee, North Tripura

**SPIRITUAL HUMANISM OF
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: A NEW RE-
LIGION FOR HUMANITY** *by Dr. P.L.
Devraj; Drishya Books, Punnamm,
Thrissur 680002; 1997; pp. 107; Rs. 60.*

Swami Vivekananda is now catching the sharp attention of scholars (not necessarily 'religious' in any sense of the word) belonging to several disciplines. The resilience of his pragmatic spirituality is found amazingly contemporary, even by those who 'deconstruct' (with a fervour worthy of even fundamentalists in religion, all traditional, ie foundational) narratives.

Viewed in such a context, the book under review is a welcome challenge to purely 'secular' readings of Swamiji. The attempt is all the more desirable since 'humanism' (of any brand) is suspect in contemporary cultural studies. 'The practical teaching of Swamiji are [sic] predominantly humanistic which is found in the philosophy of Vivekananda may be called "Spiritual humanism,"' says Dr. Devraj.

The implications are analysed in six chapters. The basic frame of reference is the claim that 'we find in modern Indian humanism a synthesis of ancient Indian values and modern Western sci-

ence.' Moreover, it is held that 'the modern Indian thinkers have realized that an integral humanism is possible on the basis of religious and spiritual insights of the traditional Indian thought' of which 'Swami Vivekananda is one of the greatest figures.' Basing himself on these assumptions, Dr. Devraj studies Swamiji's contribution in terms of both Western humanistic agenda and the Indian dimension. While the relation between humanism and the Marxist as well as Existentialist humanistic concerns is analysed effectively, in the exposition of Indian ethos, it is heartening to find mention of M.N. Roy — a relatively neglected but very dominant figure of modern Indian renaissance. (Dr. Devraj's assessment of Sir Narayanaguru is comparably valuable.)

However, in assessing Swamiji himself one gets the impression that the humanistic strain is not adequately traced: for instance, Dr. Devraj's statement that 'Vivekananda postulated his concept of human equality on the Sankhya analysis of human nature' seems too simplistic even when one appreciates the attempt to relate all this to the *Bhagavad Gita*. In short, the philosophical background of Swamiji's thought is not traced fully.

Similarly, the crucial chapter on 'Spiritual Humanism of Swami Vivekananda' contains several insights but these do not adequately bring them to focus since the chapter is by and large a summary of the various yogas and very commonplace notions of the socio-political relevance of Swamiji. The core of humanistic concerns is there but in assertion not demonstration.

Nevertheless, one can hardly underestimate the intrinsic significance of the area chosen by Dr. Devraj for in-depth study. It has insights but lacks critical rigour and lucid presentation. (In fact, the book needs rigorous editing, not to say, proof-reading.) With a little attention to clearer methodology, the book would have gained in conceptual clarity.

Dr. M. Sivaramkrishna, Hyderabad

UPANAYANA: THE HINDU CEREMONY OF THE SACRED THREAD by R.C. Prasad (tr.); Motilal Banarsidass; Jawahar Nagar, New Delhi 110007; pp. xi+191; Rs. 125.

It is enjoined upon every Hindu to undergo certain sacraments called *samskāras*, which are believed to purify the body and mind, and sanctify the person as a whole. The *grhya-sūtras*, which form a part of the *vedāṅgas*, *kalpa*, describe the various *samskāras*. Although the number of prescribed *samskāras* varies, the classical number ac-

cepted is sixteen. They start with conception, and end with *antyeṣṭi* or the funeral rite. Of these, *upanayana*, or investment with the sacred thread, is a very important sacrament to be undergone only by the first three castes. This sacrament entitles the person to study the scriptures and other subjects helpful for leading a correct communal life. This also symbolizes the end of animality — a life of only sense gratification, and the embarking on the path of spiritual discipline, when alone a person becomes a true human being. Therefore, *upanayana* is considered a spiritual birth, and one who has undergone this *samskāra* becomes a *dvija* or twice-born.

The present book, dealing with the *upanayana samskāra*, has three chapters. The first, entitled *Pūjas*, deals with the worship of various deities, which has to be performed prior to any *samskāra*. The second deals with the tonsure of the head; this, known as *cūdākarana*, is also an important *samskāra*. The scalp hair with which a child is born is removed, leaving a tuft of hair on the crown. This is generally performed during the first or third year after birth. The reason this *samskāra* is included here is that *cūdākarana* is performed again, just before *upanayana*. The third chapter deals with *upanayana*.

The various preparatory rites and the rituals to be performed are given in detail. All the mantras to be chanted are given both in Devanagari and Roman scripts. Their meaning and interpretation are provided. A majority of the Hindus today hardly have any knowledge of their cultural and religious heritage, and of Sanskrit. However, most *savarna* Hindus undergo the *cūdākarana* and *upanayana samskāras*. This book will be of immense use to those who wish to understand the rites and the mantras concerned. It will also be helpful to Hindus domiciled outside India, who may not have ready access to a learned priest.

In a vast country like India, with its varied cultural patterns, there are always some variations in the rites and rituals prescribed. The present book is perhaps relevant to the Gangetic plain. However, the principal mantras will be the same for all regions.

One often hears that women also underwent the *upanayana samskāra* in the Vedic period. No mention of this is made in this book. The book depends on *Manu-smṛiti* and this perhaps is the reason no mention is made of girls.

The book is said to be a translation, but surprisingly the name of the original author and the language of the original text are not mentioned. The translator, according to the back leaf, was a teacher of English Literature and, this being so, one expects better English from him.

Dr. Kamala S. Jaya Rao, Hyderabad

News and Reports

Centenary of Ramakrishna Mission

At our Mumbai centre, Revered Swami Smanandanandaji Maharaj, General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated a pictorial exhibition on 'Swami Vivekananda's Call to the Nation' on 26 August 1998, and addressed the distinguished gathering on 'The Centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission' that afternoon.

'The Best KVK Award 1997'

The Divyayan Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Morabadi, Ranchi, which had been declared the best KVK in the country during the year 1997, was presented 'The Best KVK Award 1997' by the Government of India on 16 July 1998. The award consisted of Rs. 50,000/- in cash, a citation and a memento.

E-Mail Address

The e-mail address of our Boston and Providence centres in USA is vedanta@ix.netcom.com.

Prof. Amartya Sen

The *Prabuddha Bharata* heartily congratulates Prof. Amartya Sen (64) on being awarded the Nobel Prize for his work on welfare economics.

Swami Vivekananda's feeling for the poor, the under-privileged and the suffering is well-known. Page after page of his *Life and Complete Works* show his deep anguish at the sorry state of the poor. One

of the important solutions which Swamiji suggested was providing equal opportunity and education to one and all.

Of Prof. Amartya Sen's notable achievements in welfare economics, the idea of entitlement is important. Why do famines occur? It was thought that natural calamities brought about failure in the agricultural sector, and this caused famines. Dr. Sen's work, however, reveals cases where, in spite of a nation's suffering from famine, its food stock was so good that it even exported essential commodities. So, it is not lack of food that causes famines but the problem of entitlement: the poor and the miserable cannot afford to buy the food that is available. Famines apart, the hard reality of hunger that is looming large on almost every continent of the globe today needs proper attention. A newer approach towards solving the problems of poverty and hunger, based on the principles of equal opportunity to one and all, is what is necessary. That is what Prof. Sen means when he says that a nation's progress should not be counted by its economic growth or gross national profit alone; rather, the true yardstick of economic progress and stability is proper distribution of wealth. In a time when global economy is in the doldrums, we hope Prof. Sen's welfare economics will be considered seriously by economists so that the situation may improve soon. □



A Small Wonder

It was the time when Sri Ramakrishna had the first flush of pain in his throat. Golap-Ma told him one day that she knew of a famous doctor. Sri Ramakrishna was, like a boy, at once ready to go to the doctor. So a small party—the Master, Golap-Ma, Latu and Kali—left by boat the next morning from Dakshineswar, hired a carriage at Kamartuli, met Dr. Durgacharan, and got medicines. The party then visited Beadon Gardens, enjoyed the beauty of the place and started homeward. While on the boat, all of them felt a great unrest owing to unbearable hunger. It was late noon and none had eaten since morning. All they now had was a penny from Golap-Ma. The boat was stopped and sweets purchased. As the others looked on, Sri Ramakrishna alone ate all the sweets, and asked Golap-Ma to throw the leaf plate into the river, and drank the water she fetched him in the clasp of her hands. He was satiated. Suddenly, the other three felt that their hunger was appeased and tiredness gone. Initially there were smiles, then laughter, in which Sri Ramakrishna also joined. And the laughter was uncontrollable, as the boat sailed home!

—retold from *A Portrait of Sri Ramakrishna*